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Hypertextuality and polyphony in Tom Stoppard's stage plays

Hypertextuality and Polyphony in Tom Stoppard's Stage Plays

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Abstract

This thesis analyses selected works of Tom Stoppard in terms of Genette's notion of 'hypertextuality' as transtextual relationship and Bakhtin's 'polyphony' of voices and ideas, and examines how the playwright's (re)creative and (re)interpretive rendering of literature, philosophy, aesthetics, science, art, culture and history offers his contemporary perspective on the multiplicity of themes and texts in the plays. The thesis identifies the appeal in (re)reading or (re)spectating Stoppard's explicitly palimpsestuous texts, while considering the extent to which receivers of the hypertexts need to be aware of and conversant with the hypotexts in order to fully appreciate Stoppard's work.

Following the opening chapter, in which the critical concepts of hypertextuality and polyphony are discussed, chapter 2 considers *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967) as a transfocalization of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, demonstrating polyphony of dualities. Chapter 3 looks at *Travesties* (1974) as a hypertext which employs plural hypertextualities (pastiche, mixed parody and travesty) and which exhibits polyphony of perceptions on art and politics, using the device of *mise-en-abyme*. Chapter 4 explores *Arcadia* (1993) in terms of dramatic transposition of ideas from other disciplines and reactivation of literary pastoral traditions. In chapter 5, *Indian Ink* (1995) is analysed as a post-colonial perspective on the ethics of empire, re-contextualizing works of Anglo-Indian literature and art. Chapter 6 discusses *The Coast of Utopia* trilogy (2002) in terms of intermodal transmodalization, along with duplicity and polyphony of textual, structural and ideological layers. The concluding chapter questions the effect of Stoppard's hypertextual adaptation and polyphonic re-presentations on audiences and readers of different levels of familiarity with the hypotexts, arguing that the carefully constructed combination of contrasting ideas, paradoxes and dualities in Stoppard's hypertexts offers opportunities for appreciation at various levels of 'knowing', exposing the subjectivity of perceptions and celebrating the many-voicedness of society.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

> It's wanting to know that makes us matter. Otherwise we're going out the way we came in.
>
> *Arcadia*, 1993: 75

Sir Tom Stoppard[1] is a contemporary British playwright whose work is characterised by intellectual inquiry, wit, originality, eclecticism and 'artistic borrowing' (Rabinowitz, 1980: 241), not simply from previous literary and theatrical works, but also from other disciplines including philosophy, aesthetics, history, politics, horticulture, mathematics and modern physics, and from non-literary arts such as painting, music and cinema. Because of this, his plays are known for their ability to challenge audience members as well as to entertain them, a feature summed up in his use of the term 'recreation': 'Theatre is a form of recreation – in both senses of the word. It has the ability to entertain but also to recreate a past era, past life' (Ostrovsky, *Financial Times Magazine*, 6 September 2003, p. 37), and theatre 'can be recreation for people who like to stretch their minds' (Jaggi, *Guardian*, 6 September 2008, p. 12).

Stoppard compares his style of playwriting with 'carpet-making' or 'convergences of different threads' (Hayman, 1977: 4), the resulting work becoming as if 'two trains arrive on the same line without colliding' (Guppy, 1988: 40). He has also remarked that the theatre is not

[1] Hereafter referred to as Stoppard.

meant to be a place to give a history lesson or a seminar and a play should be 'self-sufficient' even for audience members who have no background knowledge of the events or characters (Rose, 2007). What distinguishes Stoppard's plays is his ability to make learning, discovering and knowing enjoyable at all levels, while for those more familiar with the content matter, there are always more to be discovered in the multi-layered text, the effect of which is to encourage the audience to have an intellectual curiosity similar to his own:

> I like trying to create a spark through a collaboration between me and the audience. A lot of the time there are these ghost plays, ghost books and so on behind my plays. It's not that I'm looking into the past for its own sake, it's just because I love the world of literature completely and rather sweetly expect my audience to share this love and therefore pick up what I drop. (Byrne, *Independent*, 14 March 2008)

By frequently referring to the past and recapturing its literary artefacts, Stoppard not only widens the scope of his plays, but also illuminates an inexhaustible heritage of writers, such as Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, E. M. Forster, Alfred Housman, viewing them from new contemporary perspectives. Stoppard's artistic borrowing evokes 'timelessness in a literature' and is 'a way of making oneself understood or of arresting attention, an exhortation to learn and to create, and the irrefutable evidence of our concern with a tradition, which we try not so much to imitate as to reshape and reinterpret' (Weisgerber, 1970: 44, 45).

Critical responses to Stoppard's plays and the playwright himself have thoroughly examined these characteristics. In order to go beyond these, however, this thesis looks more specifically at ways in which his work responds to other ideas, other people's work and other books through his creation of a new text ('the hypertext') from other text(s) ('the hypotext(s)'). This thesis also

explores 'many-voicedness' (polyphony) in his work, not just in terms of a number of different voices co-existing and expressing their various views simultaneously, but also, crucially, in terms of the equal weight given to these voices, in the light of Stoppard's statement, 'That's what playmaking is; you have to take everybody's side' (O'Connor, *Orange County Register*, 2 April 1989). In order to do this, this study draws on two particular concepts, one from Gerárd Genette ('hypertextuality') and the other from Mikhail Bakhtin ('polyphony'). These can be applied to almost all of Stoppard's work, but this thesis focuses on a representative selection of his plays, showing how hypertextuality and polyphony enhance the dramatic effect and achieve Stoppard's objective of 'contriving the perfect marriage between the play of ideas and farce or perhaps even high comedy' (quoted in Hudson, Itzin and Trussler, 1974; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 59).[2]

This thesis draws on Genette's method of hypertextual analysis while looking at other approaches to adaptational transformation and reflects further on the implications of Stoppard's use of textual transformations from literature, philosophy, aesthetics, science, art and history. The examination of Stoppard's eclectic interweaving of external source texts also includes self-parody or 'self-quotations' (Weisgerber, 1970: 41) that emerge from the self-referential, self-reflexive structures within his plays, further enhancing appreciation of the diversity, high comedy and organic unity in his plays of ideas. Before taking this discussion further, however, it is necessary to look at the nature of Stoppard's work and the context of the two critical concepts.

Stoppard's plays suggest a world-view in which there is constant interplay between the dualities of art and science, and between absolute and relative values, 'a universe in which

[2] Stoppard has commented: 'As to whether this is a desirable objective, I have no idea. It represents two sides of my own personality, which can be described as seriousness compromised by my frivolity, or . . . frivolity redeemed by my seriousness' (Gussow, 1995: 14).

everything is relative, yet in which moral absolutes exist' (Tynan, 1989: 302). He has stressed the long-term importance of art as providing 'the moral sensibility, from which we make our judgments about the world' (Hudson, Itzin and Trussler, 1974; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 66). Morality is a recurring theme in Stoppard's plays, although he likes to present every side of an issue rather than nail his colours to one particular mast: 'I write plays because writing dialogue is the only respectable way of contradicting yourself' (Gussow, 1995: 3). In the words of a character (Moon) in his only novel, *Lord Malquist and Mr Moon* (1967):

> But I take both parts, O'Hara, leapfrogging myself along the great moral issues, refuting myself and rebutting the refutation towards a truth that must be the compound of two opposite half-truths. And you never reach it because there is always something more to say. (2006a: 53).

These multiple perspectives and paradoxical collisions of ideas are not new dramatic techniques; what is distinctive to Stoppard's plays is the manner in which he uses them to 'frame deeply personal considerations of human action, its motives and limitations and values' (Gruber, 1981: 296), which allows him at the same time to reflect on the purpose of art and politics.

The constant use of cross-disciplinary allusions and quotations, continued borrowing from history as a source and a penchant for adopting schemes, characters and content from earlier works of art are core features of Stoppard's plays, in which 'cultural references by the thousands [. . .] all interconnect like a nervous system' (Stoppard quoted in Guppy, 1988: 47). This interconnectedness with social, cultural, scientific and historical sources in Stoppard's work is characteristic of what theorists have identified as 'intertextuality'. Although 'one of the central ideas in contemporary literary theory', intertextuality is not a transparent term with a single definitive meaning and is therefore 'one of the most commonly used and misused terms in

contemporary critical vocabulary' (Allen, 2000: 2). The term intertextuality was first coined in the 1960s by Julia Kristeva, who, in her account of the Russian critic Bakhtin's theories about the novel and his vision regarding the dialogic (or two-sided) nature of word, language and text, stated that:

> horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bring to light an important fact: each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read. In Bakhtin's work, these two axes, which he calls *dialogue* and *ambivalence*, are not clearly distinguished. Yet, what appears as a lack of rigor is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin: any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotation; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as double. (Kristeva, 1980: 66)

Although the traditional association of the word 'text' as 'a tissue, a woven fabric' (Barthes, 1977: 159) was restricted to works of literature, in discussions of intertextuality it came to stand for all cultural and artistic productions of 'complex patterns of encoding, re-encoding, allusion, echo, transposing of previous systems and codes' (Allen, 2000: 174). As Roland Barthes notes: 'a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation' (1977: 148).

Although Bakhtin himself never used the term intertextuality, his view of the intertextual nature of novels and his use of concepts such as 'dialogism' and 'polyphony' inform other critical positions on intertextuality, including that of poststructuralist critics (Kristeva and Barthes), who employ intertextuality to disrupt notions of meaning and more structuralist-minded critics such as Genette, who use the term to locate literary meaning. Genette thinks of his approach to a relational reading as '*open structuralism*' because it is more concerned with

demonstrating how a text can 'read another' rather than insisting on 'the closure of the text' and deciphering the inner structures of the 'text itself' (1997: 399).

This thesis adopts a combination of Genette's analysis of 'transtextual relationships' (1997: 1), particularly his concept of hypertextuality, along with Bakhtin's notion of polyphony within a text, as dual lenses through which to discuss the structure of Stoppard's work and to examine its thematic and theatrical effect. These two critical concepts are useful in that they foreground Stoppard's multi-layered, multi-faceted dramas, opening doors to the discussion of the 'horizontal axis' and 'vertical axis' (Kristeva, 1980: 66) in Stoppard's texts.

Stoppard uses different kinds of intertextual and intratextual 'doubling' devices or self-professed 'double acts' (Macaulay, *Financial Times*, 31 October 1998, p. 7) in his work, which not only duplicate or echo the meaning, but also amplify or modify each other. This doubling includes, but is not limited to: doubling of characters, double-time schemes, overlapping locations, doubling of dramatic narratives and plot, and doubling of lines and scenes through time reversal and repetition. The creative and selective use of quotations from source texts, or 'textual doubling' (Kelly, 2001: 11), is paralleled in his dramatic structure, which often 'doubles (or trebles or quadruples) itself within the play' and in his predilection for 'doubling, mirroring, or twinning characters' along with 'all the devices of linguistic twinning: puns, foreign languages (translated and not), invented languages (translated and not), *double entendres*, and malapropisms' (Zinman, 2001: 121). The use of varied doubling techniques on stage, or the 'interpenetration of text and text, re-contextualizing and transforming the words of others' (Meyer, 1989: 105) contributes to dramatic efficacy, enriching the texture of a play by enhancing its imagery and illuminating the essence of what is emerging through juxtaposition, thus conveying Stoppard's multi-layered exploration of themes, such as the paradoxes in life and the

ironies of history, the relativity of truth, the contingent nature of reality and identity, differing perceptions of love, art and politics, the essential relationship of human beings and the association or integration between apparent opposites.

Through these various doubling devices, Stoppard creates plays of ideas or 'argument plays', in which he writes for 'two people rather than for One Voice' and with no 'heroes who express [his] point of view' (quoted in Gussow, 1995: 35). This tendency to 'write about oppositions and double acts' is based on his notion that the 'conflict between one's intellectual and emotional response to questions of morality produce the tension that makes the play' (quoted in Gussow, 1995: 13–4). Such a dual visualization of the role of the playwright has continued to mark his work since *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967), culminating in his trilogy, *The Coast of Utopia* (2002).[3]

Exploration of a multi-voiced vision of human consciousness is manifested throughout Stoppard's work. Peter J. Rabinowitz, in his discussion of narrative complexity in Stoppard's *Lord Malquist and Mr Moon*, identifies 'Bakhtinian dialogism' (2001: 66), which involves 'polyphony' or 'ideological multi-voicedness' (Bakhtin, 1984: 42) as a significant feature. Polyphony, in its musical derivation, refers to the general harmony of contrapuntal threads resulting when a number of voices sing their own individual melodies at the same time. In a wider context, as 'the simultaneous combination of parts or elements or, here, voices', polyphony 'demonstrates and celebrates the dialogic nature of society by presenting a vision of human society dominated by the dialogue and play between voices' (Allen, 2000: 22, 216). In Stoppard's plays, we have various applications of this concept to the stage, when instances of duality and opposing views (usually between two protagonists), are presented in a polyphonic or

[3] This thesis considers Stoppard's plays up to and including *The Coast of Utopia* trilogy.

double-voiced context. On one level (keeping to the musical analogy), when these duets (or dialogues) are going on, characters present their opinions in simple duality; on another level, these exchanges combine to make a conceptual polyphony of opinions and ideas in the play as a whole, the total polyphonic effect of which emerges as an extended (and occasionally dissonant) discourse on the themes explored in each play.

Stoppard uses this musical analogy when explaining his admiration of *Next Time I'll Sing to You* (James Saunders, 1962) 'simply because it's written like music. It's a most beautiful and brilliant use of language' and also suggests a possible way of viewing *Look Back in Anger* (John Osborne, 1956) in terms of musical form and style: 'It is as formal as a quadrille, if you can have a quadrille with two girls and a man – you could draw a play on graph paper, with lines for Jimmy, Alison and [Helen] – crossing and re-crossing in a formal construction' (Gordon, 1968; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 23).

1.2 Notions of hypertextuality and polyphony: Genette and Bakhtin

Although Genette finds most of his examples of explicit hypertextuality in novels, and while the Russian literary theorist Bakhtin sees Dostoevsky's novels in particular as representing the fundamental characteristics of polyphony in artistic creation, asserting that 'drama is by its very nature alien to genuine polyphony' (1984: 34), Stoppard has convincingly shown in his dramatic texts that hypertextuality and polyphony can in fact be valuable tools of the playwright, enabling and enhancing his/her intention of presenting every possible perspective in an unbiased manner, while employing a diversity of sources. From this perspective, the two concepts explored by Genette and Bakhtin offer instructive insights into the textual and structural discussions of

Stoppard's work, with all its binding characteristics such as intellectual curiosity, literariness, witty and well-constructed speeches, change of tones and human voices, allusive texts, use of metaphors and overlapping images, emotional and philosophical prototypes of characters, moral concerns and complex thematic fabrics.

Writing in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1997), Genette introduces the notion of hypertextuality as one of five types of what he calls 'transtextuality' or 'the textual transcendence of the text [. . .] defined roughly as "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts"' (1997: 1), adding that these types are not 'separate and absolute categories without any reciprocal contact or overlapping' (1997: 7). Graham Allen sees this as Genette's particular variation on the concept of 'intertextuality' (2000: 101), although Genette is inclined to restrict the term to 'a relationship of copresence between texts or among several texts . . . the actual presence of one text within another' (1997: 1–2), listing intertextuality as one of the categories of transtextuality along with 'paratextuality' (the range of relationships that binds the text, such as a title, a subtitle, prefaces, forewords, notes, book covers and many other kinds of secondary signals), 'metatextuality' ('the relationship most often labelled "commentary" [uniting] a given text to another of which it speaks without necessarily citing it' (1997: 4)) and 'architextuality' (the relationship of each singular text to its generic perceptions, such as tragedy, romance or epic), before identifying hypertextuality as the most implicit and comprehensive type of transtextual relationship.

Genette further defines hypertextuality as 'any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary' (1997: 5). He goes on to explain that a hypertext is any text derived from a pre-existing text either through simple transformation or

indirect imitation. Hypertextuality therefore can be seen as a universal feature of literariness, since almost every literary work evokes other literary works, and all works are in that sense hypertextual, although some are more explicitly hypertextual than others (1997: 7–9).

Among the many examples Genette uses to illustrate his point is the relationship uniting James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) (the hypertext) to Homer's pre-existing epic, *The Odyssey* (the hypotext). Interestingly, *Ulysses* functions in turn as one of the hypotexts for Stoppard's *Travesties* (1974) (the new hypertext), in which the novel's fragmented, free-associative stream-of-consciousness style is imitated. Excerpts from *Ulysses* are also quoted in *Travesties* while presenting Joyce (who is writing a chapter in *Ulysses*) as one of the voices on art and politics that appear in the play. Genette represents this 'duplicity' of 'textual relations' using the analogy of the *palimpsest*, that is, 'on the same parchment, one text can become superimposed upon another, which it does not quite conceal but allows to show through' (1997: 398–9). Applying this notion to the hypertext, Genette concludes that 'the hypertext invites us to engage in a relational reading, the flavour of which [. . .] may well be condensed in an adjective [. . .] a *palimpsestuous* reading' (1997: 399). In other words:

> the art of "making new things out of old" has the merit, at least, of generating more complex and more savoury objects than those that are "made on purpose"; a new function is superimposed upon and interwoven with an older structure, and the dissonance between these two concurrent elements imparts its flavour to the resulting whole. (Genette, 1997: 398)

The particular merit of hypertextuality or literature functioning as a palimpsest is that 'it constantly launches ancient works into new circuits of meaning' (Genette, 1997: 400). In addition:

> the pleasure of the hypertext is also a *game*. The porosity of partitions between genres is chiefly due to the contagious potential for the playful mode in this particular aspect of literary production. [. . .] Using and processing a (hypo)text for purposes foreign to its initial program is likewise a way of playing with it, of having fun with it and making fun of it. (Genette, 1997: 399)

Stoppard's plays are rich in multi-layered hypertextuality, eliciting playfulness and literariness. While creatively rendering previous writings and their styles to formulate structures for his 'play of ideas and the work of wit' (Gollob and Roper, 1981; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 158), Stoppard interweaves them with a network of allusions to other contemporary social, cultural, historical, political and moral contexts. The hypertextual works evoke two texts for the price of one and demonstrate the fertilizing powers of hypertextual operations and the inexhaustibility of literature. From this perspective, it might be argued that Stoppard's hypertext is 'an indeterminate compound, unpredictable in its specifics, of seriousness and playfulness (lucidity and ludicity), of intellectual achievement and entertainment' (Genette, 1997: 400).

As Julie Sanders points out in her book, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006), Genette's concept of grafting is 'just one of several creative metaphors for the adaptive process', his notions of hypertext and hypotext paralleling 'the appropriative or adaptive text [and] the source text of any appropriation or rewriting' (2006: 12, 162) respectively. In her book, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), Linda Hutcheon also refers to Genette when describing adaptation as 'inherently "palimpsestuous"' work which 'openly announce[s] its overt relationship to another work or works', adding that '[i]t is what Gérard Genette would call a text in the "second degree" [. . .] created and then received in relation to a prior text' (2006: 6). This study, while agreeing

with these descriptions of the (re)creative process as they apply to Stoppard's plays, suggests that he has enlarged the concept of 'source text' and made it cross-disciplinary. Even the history of landscape gardening merits treatment as a hypotext in Stoppard's hands, combining with literary and scientific allusions and cross-references to construct a multi-faceted dramatic event.

Although Stoppard's work is saturated with the presence of his dramatic and literary precursors, his voice remains distinctly his own and Hutcheon's point that the creative process is 'a double process of interpreting and then creating something new' and 'the act of adaptation always involves both (re–)interpretation and then (re–)creation' (2006: 20, 8) is directly applicable to Stoppard's aesthetic stance as first an interpreter and then a creator. Stoppard's intentions behind the act of adaptation – creative reinterpretation or interpretive recreation – may be described as 'the desire to pay tribute by copying' rather than 'the urge to consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question' (Hutcheon, 2006: 7), so that rather than subverting traditions or undermining conventions, his hypertexts look back on the dramatic tradition, preserving and at the same time revitalising his literary and artistic heritage. In this way, his plays satisfy the 'the historical sense' that T. S. Eliot, in his 1919 essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', insisted upon as the artist's most significant achievement:

> The historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time. [. . .] No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. (Abrams, 1986: 2207)

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984), Bakhtin calls Dostoevsky 'the creator of the polyphonic novel' (1984: 7) and offers his interpretation of the novelist's 'open' texts, in which characters exist not as objects subordinate to the author, but as 'free people, capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him' (1984: 6), in a '*plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices*' simultaneously existing '*with equal rights and each with its own world*' (1984: 6).[4] Polyphony in Bakhtin's sense of the term involves the coexistence of diverse perspectives, a feature which is integral to Stoppard's works, with their open-ended dialogues between often conflicting protagonists. Stoppard's dramatisation of the multiple voices of his characters satisfies what Bakhtin identifies as a significant requirement of polyphony, 'a plurality of fully valid voices within the limits of a single work' (1984: 34). In analysing Dosteovsky's polyphonic novels, Bakhtin focuses on three aspects: firstly, 'the relative freedom and independence enjoyed by the hero and his voice under the conditions of polyphonic design'; secondly, 'the special placement of the idea in such a design'; and thirdly, 'those new principles of linkage shaping the novel into a whole' (1984: 47). Bakhtin also proposes three reasons that make 'genuine polyphony' impossible in drama, when arguing against 'a fully formed and deliberate polyphonic quality in Shakespeare's dramas', although he acknowledges that 'early budding of polyphony can indeed be detected in the dramas of Shakespeare' (1984: 33–4):

> Firstly, drama may be multi-leveled, but it cannot contain *multiple worlds*; it permits only one, and not several, systems of measurement. Secondly, [. . .] in essence each play contains only one fully valid voice, the voice of the hero, while polyphony presumes a plurality of fully

[4] Italics in works quoted in this thesis are in the originals, unless otherwise stated.

> valid voices within the limits of a single work [. . .] Thirdly, the voices in Shakespeare are not points of view on the world [. . .] Shakespearean characters are not ideologists in the full sense of the word. (Bakhtin, 1984: 34)

Ironically, this argument serves to highlight the genuine polyphony in Stoppard's dramas, which do indeed contain 'multiple worlds' in which characters are 'ideologists', and which reveal a multiplicity of human consciousnesses, voiced by equally-weighted characters whose voices are their 'points of view on the world'. Stoppard's characters and their thoughts are, to use Bakhtin's words, 'internally dialogic, adorned with polemic, filled with struggle, or [are] on the contrary open to inspiration from outside itself' (1984: 32). Stoppard presents to the audience a fully polyphonic picture of interrelationships that Clive James calls 'the stuff of life' (1998: 215).

Bakhtin also points out the significance of '*coexistence* and *interaction*' as characteristic of the polyphonic novel, in which 'all material of reality' is organized 'in the form of a dramatic juxtaposition' (1984: 28). Such juxtaposition is also an important feature in Stoppard's dramatic work, where his characters typically expound different ideological and philosophical stances:

> [T]here is very often *no* single, clear statement in my plays. What there is, is a series of conflicting statements made by conflicting characters, and they tend to play a sort of infinite leap-frog. You know, an argument, a refutation, then a rebuttal of the refutation, then a counter-rebuttal, so that there is never any point in this intellectual leap-frog at which I feel *that* is the speech to stop it on, *that* is the last word. (Hudson, Itzin and Trussler, 1974; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 58–9)

Bakhtin calls Dostoevsky 'a great artist of the idea' (1984: 85), pointing to his use of dramatic juxtaposition to amplify dramatic effect, and it is significant in this context that Stoppard too has been called 'a playwright of ideas' (Rabinowitz, 2001: 61), using juxtaposition

as the basis of humour and dramatic effect. Preserving 'distance' is also, according to Bakhtin, 'an integral part of the author's design', guaranteeing 'genuine objectivity in the representation of a character' (1984: 64), and this is similar to the 'Brechtian alienation' frequently seen in Stoppard's plays (Rabinowitz, 2001: 61). Further, Bakhtin states that the 'great dialogue' in Dostoevsky's novels includes plural leading voices, while the '*microdialogue*' (such as Raskolnikov's dialogized interior monologue at the beginning of *Crime and Punishment*) functions to reveal the 'inner unfinalizability and indeterminacy' of characters (1984: 75, 74, 63). This can be seen as corresponding to the mode of what Stoppard called 'infinite leap-frog' (Hudson, Itzin and Trussler, 1974; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 58) or 'endless leapfrog' (Gussow, 1995: 3) pursued in his dramatic texts; various monologues spoken by Stoppard's characters (for example, George Moore in *Jumpers* (1972), Henry Carr in *Travesties*, Houseman in *The Invention of Love* (1997) and Alexander Herzen in *The Coast of Utopia*) are used to reveal their contradictory inner conflicts. Throughout Stoppard's plays, the interacting, often conflicting views expressed by his characters, replete with their paradoxical or dual personalities, produce a montage of individual, sometimes discordant voices that satisfies Bakhtin's criteria for genuine polyphonic writing. This study therefore proposes that Stoppard has successfully adapted this previously novel-based literary technique to the stage.

1.3 Characteristics and qualities of Stoppard's work

Stoppard's work is, to use Gerald Prince's words, '[a] result of bricolage – of making something new with something old' which 'shows how literary discourse plays with other discourses, how it uses them in surprising fashion, how it reads them in unforeseen ways'

(Genette, 1997: x). This began with his career as a playwright in 1960, when he wrote a one-act play, *The Gamblers*, which he described to Kenneth Tynan in a letter as '*Waiting for Godot* in the death cell – prisoner and jailer – I'm sure you can imagine the rest' (Tynan, 1989: 305). Stoppard's first produced stage play, it was performed in 1965 by Bristol University Department of Drama students. His first full-length play, *A Walk on the Water* (first televised in 1963), was later revised for the stage as *Enter a Free Man* in 1968, which Stoppard came to refer to as '*Flowering Death of a Salesman*' (Tynan, 1989: 305) since it was heavily influenced by Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and Robert Bolt's *Flowering Cherry* (1957). Stoppard has outlined the main ideas, meanings and influences in his early plays in various interviews:

> I was moved by and interested by John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, *The Birthday Party* by Pinter, *Next Time I'll Sing To You* . . . I mean when I was starting to write plays. I'd be wary of calling them influence. I don't write the way I write because I liked them, I liked them because of the way I write, or despite it. (Guppy, 1988: 45)

Although he has been quoted as having been influenced by Beckett's absurdist drama in his early plays, Stoppard has pointed out that his interest was less in a Beckettian verbal echo than his style of 'confident statement followed by immediate refutation by the same voice, [and] a constant process of elaborate structure and sudden – and total – dismantlement'. The characteristic he claimed to share with Beckett and other writers in England was what he calls 'a predilection for a certain kind of intellectual or verbal humour or conceit' (Hayman, 1977: 7). This predilection can be seen in his admiration for Wilde, with whom he shares a fondness for stylish witticisms and epigrams, offering 'a constant satirical counterpoint to the absurdities of the action' (Billington, 1987: 14), in the tradition of English high comedy. Michael Billington

sees Stoppard's contribution to modern British drama as his demolition of 'the barrier between serious and fun theatre' (1987: 132):

> Stoppard's cerebral wit, philosophical inquiry and latter-day political conviction are balanced by [Alan] Ayckbourn's painful comedy, [Peter] Nichols's displays of ravaged feeling, [Edward] Bond's positive hatred of existing society, [Peter] Shaffer's spectacular theatricality, [David] Hare's sharp attacks on post-war failure and personal corruption. [. . .] Just as the epithet Pinteresque has come to mean a domestic power-game implicit with threat so the adjective 'Stoppardian' would signify to most people a well-shaped theatrical extravaganza filled with conflicting arguments and a plethora of jokes. (Billington, 1987: 169)

In addressing Stoppardian qualities and motifs in terms of 'word-intoxicated characters' and dialogues shaped with 'immense vocabulary and complex sentence structure', Toby Zinman also identifies 'a quality of high Englishness' about Stoppard's work, in that his dramatic characters are 'almost inevitably well-educated, ironical and quick-witted':

> The wit, the word play, the linguistic razzle-dazzle, the delight in talking, not only identify the characters but his kind of drama: intellectual as opposed to psychological, fast-tempoed as opposed to leisurely, crammed full as opposed to spare, dialectical as opposed to linear. (2001: 120)

Katherine E. Kelly, in her introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Tom Stoppard* (2001), notes that scholars and critics have suggested 'both a continuous shifting of Stoppard's techniques and dramatic architecture and a continuity of theme over four decades of writing' (2001: 11). From this perspective, to use Kelly's words, Stoppard's writing can be read as 'a series of transformational exchanges between texts quoted in the plays, between the history and

fiction represented by the plays, and between the writing early and later in his career' (2001: 11). This exchange is initially set up by the playwright but 'completed by "knowing" readers and spectators'. Stoppard's recycling of 'prior texts' or 'quotations from the literary past' encourages readers and spectators to collaborate 'in anticipating and then recognizing familiar but transformed texts'. Transformation is 'Stoppard's method for revising the artistic past and its customary expectations in league with a literate audience whose recognition of textual mingling completes the transformational process' (Kelly, 2001: 11).

Zinman also identifies three structural characteristics of Stoppard's plays: first, they begin with a false front, a scene the audience takes to be 'real' but later discovers to have been a ploy; second, the structure always doubles itself within the play (see above, p. 6); and third, the set design, including sound and lighting, is always an integral part of the script rather than the interpretive decoration frequently left by dramatists to their directors (2001: 121–2). Stoppard's set directions echo – another form of twinning – the larger meaning of the play. In this context, Stoppard has expressed his admiration for 'traditional values' or 'traditional ground rules' of theatre (Gussow, 1995: 7), seeing himself as 'a conservative with a small c [. . .] in politics, literature, education and theatre' whose plays do not break rules (Gussow, *New York Times*, 29 July 1979, p. 22):

> I don't set out to write plays that are hard to understand. My plays may have a fragmented look, but they're very traditional plays. Everything is logical and rational. I have no interest in anarchic or unstructured art. I'm rather conservative and have much more in common with Terence Rattigan than, say, Jean Cocteau. I believe in craftsmanship. It's what crystallizes an art form. (Eichelbaum, *San Francisco Examiner*, 28 March 1977, p. 24)

On his preference for writing persuasive speeches for every character, Stoppard has said:

> When I start writing I find it difficult, except on simple questions, to know where I stand – even in *Travesties* in the argument on art between James Joyce and Tristan Tzara. Temperamentally and intellectually, I'm very much on Joyce's side, but I found it persuasive to write Tzara's speech. [. . .] In *Jumpers*, George Moore represented a morality that I embrace, but both Moore and Archibald Jumpers spoke for me. This is also true of *Night and Day*. There are various things said by various people that I agree with. (in Gussow, 1995: 35)

In *The Coast of Utopia*, his literary detachment and liberal humanism are embodied by the character of Turgenev, who claims that he doesn't take sides, 'On the contrary, I take every possible side' (*Salvage*, 2008a: 316). Rather than being recognised for this ability to be impartial, Stoppard has been criticized for not being more socially committed in his plays. By the playwright's own account, his theatre is different: 'Some writers write because they burn with a cause which they further by writing about it. I burn with no causes. I cannot say that I write with any social objective. One writes because one loves writing, really' (Stoppard, *Sunday Times*, 25 February 1968a, p. 47).

Nevertheless, Stoppard has always pursued moral commitment, tying to be 'consistent about moral behaviour' (Gussow, 1995: 35) and placing individual freedom over collective restriction. As he pointed out in a 1974 interview with the editors of *Theatre Quarterly*, his plays reflect his belief that 'all political acts have a moral basis to them and are meaningless without it' and that 'all political acts must be judged in moral terms, in terms of their consequences' (Hudson, Itzin and Trussler, 1974; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 64). These ideas are evident in his more conventionally politically inclined plays, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (1977), *Professional Foul* (a 1977 television play set in the year of Charter 77 in Prague), *Night and Day* (1978),

Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth (1979), and more recently, *Rock'n'Roll* (2006), which affirms humanitarian values and human spirit, from the double perspectives of Prague and Cambridge.

For Stoppard, the notion of technique in theatre is related to 'the control of the information that flows from a play to its audience, and in particular the ordering of the information', which is more to do with 'the possible meanings of the narrative' than 'the elements of a narrative' (Stoppard, *New York Review of Books*, 23 September 1999, pp. 8, 10). Stories work through the suggestive interplay of characters and ideas in his work: 'The subject matter of the play exists before the story and it is always something abstract. [. . .] Gradually I see how a pure idea can be married with a dramatic event' (Stoppard quoted in Guppy, 1988: 30). This concept led Stoppard to touch on the essential significance and value of a text:

> I think that without a text, and a fairly self-knowing text, theatre of the kind I'm involved in is impossible. Theatre is indeed a physical event, and the words are not enough without everything else, but everything else is nothing without the words, and in the extravagant complex equation of sound and light, it's certain words in a certain order that – often mysteriously – turn our *hearts* over. (Stoppard, *New York Review of Books*, 23 September 1999, p. 10) (my emphasis)

Stoppard's choice of 'hearts' rather than 'minds' is significant here since it is easy to talk about words as intellectual energy, but his implication is that ideas are nothing if we don't feel them. Stoppard seems to suggest that we are most secure (perhaps also most 'human') when what we think and feel are the same things. He also sees his text as one constituent of the totality of theatre, rather than a sacred piece of creation that is 'set in stone' once it is written:

> I like a kind of rough theatre where everything goes into the melting pot. [. . .] When you write

> a play it makes a certain kind of noise in your head, and the rehearsal and staging is an attempt to persuade the actors to produce this noise. Sometimes the actors have a better noise to offer. [. . .] there's a cadence and a rhythm, and of course, it's expressed in language. But theatre is a curious equation in which language is merely one of the components. (Stoppard, 1988)

Like other contemporary playwrights, Stoppard attends rehearsals of his plays and is happy to adjust or refine his script to fit the stage dynamics of the particular production, by listening to the actors, interacting with them and including additions and subtractions as deemed necessary for them, the stage and the audience. Because of this, published versions of his scripts often reflect changes made in rehearsal, resulting in the existence of multiple texts for his plays.

Figure 1. Tom Stoppard in rehearsal for *The Invention of Love* (1997) (photographer John Haynes). (By permission of the National Theatre Archive.)

In terms of the creative process of playwriting, Stoppard is known for his thorough research

into the subject matter, although he does not consider this as 'research'. For instance, during the course of writing *Hapgood* (1988), a play exploring the duplicity of human beings through the metaphor of the duality of light, achieved by interweaving the wave/particle theory of light with double-crossing in espionage, Stoppard read books about mathematics:

> I read for interest and enjoyment, and when I cease to enjoy it I stop. I didn't research quantum mechanics but I was fascinated by the mystery which lies in the foundation of the observable world, of which the most familiar example is the wave/particle duality of light. I thought it was a good metaphor for human personality. The language of espionage lends itself to this duality – think of the double agent. (Guppy, 1988: 31)

What Stoppard does with the synthesis of previous texts and his invented dialogues is to 'extend an audience's interests and make them curious about the subjects he tackles' (Billington, 1987: 132). Having the audience entertained in such way or in his words 'having the audience on the play's side' is what Stoppard considers as one of the 'the twin preoccupations of writing a play', the other being 'to make the play say what you want it to say' (Billington, 1987: 139).

1.4 Stoppard's creation of hypertexts and multiple-voices

Stoppard's plays are abundant in informed references to philosophy, physics, metaphysics, mathematics or circus acrobatics, and other specialised fields, along with thematic and stylistic echoes of his own previous writings, or in Genette's terms, 'self-pastiche' which 'requires a writer gifted with both a high degree of stylistic individuality and a great aptitude for imitation' (1997: 125). This diverse range of references, along with a network of literary and cultural

allusions, reflects Stoppard's 'bibliophilia' or his deep interest in books (Gussow, 1995: 138).

Stoppard has remarked that he has 'enormous difficulty in working out plots' and that using '*Hamlet*, or a classical whodunit, or another play [. . .] for a basic structure takes a lot of pressure off me' (Hudson, Itzin and Trussler, 1974; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 60). Examples of such borrowing appear in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Dogg's Hamlet* and *Cahoot's Macbeth*, which interlace with and refer to Shakespeare. One is reminded of Agatha Christie's whodunit genre in *The Real Inspector Hound* (1968) and *Jumpers*.

Figure 2. The Real Inspector Hound (1985) Eleanor Bron as Lady Cynthia Muldoon and Ian McKellen as Inspector Hound (photo John Haynes). (By permission of the National Theatre Archive.)

After Magritte (1970) echoes the surrealist painter René Magritte's 'bizarre set of components [. . .] in a mechanism that is closer to Agatha Christie than to Samuel Beckett' (Stoppard quoted in Gussow, 1995: 7). One of the most interesting echoes is in *Indian Ink* (1995), which evokes Anglo-Indian literature, including E. M. Forster's novel, *A Passage to India* (1924) and Emily Eden's travel diary, *Up the Country* (1866). Furthermore, the scenes along the boat ride on the river in *The Invention of Love* resemble Jerome K. Jerome's 1889 novel, *Three Men in a Boat* (which Stoppard adapted in 1975 as a television play and as a radio play in 1994). The role of the Chorus in Greek tragedy is transformed to Oxford dons and London journalists in Victorian England, providing the background information to the paradoxical lives and works of the main characters (the poet and scholar Housman and his foil Wilde). The play also evokes various Greek motifs and myths, with direct references to the Roman Horace and many other writers. Its use of Charon, the ferryman across the Styx, at the opening of the play, refers back to the same character's appearance in Aristophanes's comedy, *The Frogs*, which as Housman comments in the play, itself 'quotes from Aeschylus' (Stoppard, 1997: 27).

The Coast of Utopia trilogy takes Isaiah Berlin's *Russian Thinkers* (1978) and E. H. Carr's *The Romantic Exiles* (1933) as main sources, along with Herzen's essays and memoirs, in its depiction of Russian intellectuals searching for the ideal society, while the fragmentary style of *Rock'n'Roll* is an indirect imitation of the poetic technique of Sappho, whose love poems are also integrated in the play, foregrounding the love depicted between the characters. Stoppard invariably acknowledges his literary borrowings, either by mentioning them during the course of the plays or by making the writers appear as dramatic characters. As Joan Fitzpatrick Dean notes, Stoppard's 'borrowings from Wilde and Shakespeare, as well as his parodies, are indicative of his consciousness of writing in a dramatic tradition' (1981: 14), which, in Stoppard's own words,

is 'in a mild and humble way a homage' (Gussow, 1995: 7).

In the case of *Jumpers*, Stoppard read books on moral philosophy and logical positivism, while the idea of *Dogg's Hamlet* was derived from a section of Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations (Stoppard, 1996a: 141). As sources for *Travesties*, he acknowledges his use of Richard Ellmann's biography of Joyce (*James Joyce*), Lenin's *Collected Writings*, his wife's *Memories of Lenin*, and several other books on Lenin, as well as books on Dadaism. *Arcadia* embodies the playwright's readings on chaos theory, fractal geometry, the history of English landscape gardening and Byron's life and poetry.

Stoppard's dramatic texts, with their wealth of ideas and intellectual wit, combine and interweave seemingly disparate ideas, restructuring his sources (the hypotexts) into a multiplicity of themes and layers of meaning, which emerge in his finished plays (the hypertexts). Carefully constructed infrastructures underlie plays which challenge and stimulate the intellectual curiosity by their numerous references, correlatives and implications, presented through polyphony of themes and voices, unfolding 'like Bach fugues or palindromes – symmetrical, precise, elaborately patterned repeating sets of events' (Buck, *Vogue*, March 1984; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 168), giving the audience opportunities for reflection as well as for entertainment.

1.5 Conclusion

This study brings into focus a broad spectrum of hypertextuality and polyphony in Stoppard's stage plays, looking through literary, aesthetic, scientific, cultural and historical lenses, within the context of an overall philosophical lens which gives coherence to the whole.

Chapter 2 of the thesis considers *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* as a playful and

metadramatic alteration in the narrative focus (or 'transfocalization') of *Hamlet*, examining the implications of transfocalization and polyphony of dualities. Chapter 3 examines *Travesties* as a hypertext which employs plural hypertextualities (pastiche, mixed parody and travesty) and which demonstrates polyphony of perceptions on art, politics and other matters, using the device of *mise-en-abyme*. Chapter 4 explores *Arcadia* in terms of 'dramatic transposition' of ideas from other disciplines and 'generic reactivation' of literary pastoral traditions, in addition to polyphony of dualities in text and performance.

Chapter 5 focuses on cultural and artistic hypertextuality together with a polyphony of Anglo-Indian perceptions in *Indian Ink*. The play's scope is widened by its re-contextualizing the earlier works of Anglo-Indian literature in contemporary terms, along with its continued quotations of European and Indian art. Chapter 6 discusses *The Coast of Utopia* trilogy in terms of dramatic 'transposition' or intermodal '*transmodalization*'. This chapter brings into focus the duplicity and polyphony of textual, structural and conceptual relations in this trilogy, by examining Stoppard's use of quotations, events, characters or places from his source texts, and the resulting effect on stage. Chapter 7 reflects on the (re)creative and (re)interpretative process of Stoppard's palimpsestuous texts and looks back on the findings of the previous chapters from the perspectives of adaptation and appropriation. The question of the effect of Stoppard's hypertextual practices and polyphonic re-presentations for the receivers (audiences and readers of different levels of familiarity with the hypotexts) is considered in greater depth.

Each of Chapters 2 to 6 is preceded by an introduction with the overall aim to account for the circumstances and context of the first productions of each of these plays and to historicize Stoppard's intertextuality thorough a more sustained referencing on the theatrical context in which he sought to position himself at given cultural moments. Exemplary comparisons are made

with other British playwrights' approaches to re-use, intertextuality, the foregrounding of moral and political ideas, and the representation of history. While specific plays are offered as points of reference and comparison in these sections, in order to provide the wider theatrical context of particular decades of production, the focus remains on Stoppard, including the influence he may have had on other playwrights, and vice versa, and on the positioning of his work in the development of modern British theatre.

Just as Chapters 2 to 6 explore different types of hypertextuality, so the introduction section of each one considers different aspects of contextualisation. In Chapter 2 (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*), Stoppard's creative rewriting of Shakespeare is examined in its wider context by looking at the changes taking place in the staging of Shakespeare plays by the Royal Shakespeare Company in the 1960s, and referring to Edward Bond's *Lear* as a comparative example of a contemporary British playwright's re-interpretation of Shakespeare.

In Chapter 3 (*Travesties*), Stoppard's choice of the genre of intellectual comedy is compared with the alternative choices being made in the dominant political theatre of the seventies, with particular reference to David Edgar (*Destiny*) and David Hare (*Fanshen*). By setting Stoppard, Edgar and Hare together, their specific interests are juxtaposed and Stoppard's strategy of intertextuality is positioned in relation to his educative objectives and his policy of discussing ideas overtly within his plays. Similarities and distinctions are also drawn between Stoppard and Trevor Griffiths (*The Party*), whose plays include both the political and the comic in their open debating of ideas, and with another comedic playwright Alan Ayckbourn (*The Norman Conquests*).

In Chapter 4 (*Arcadia*), the use of a particular historical setting is contextualised by referring to John Whiting's *A Penny for a Song*, Howard Brenton's *Bloody Poetry* and Bond's

two plays, *The Fool* and *Restoration* as points of comparison. Each play's relationship to Stoppard's *Arcadia* is considered, while Bond's creative and re-creative use of a historical moment in the eighteenth century as a historical intertext for the reworking of the Restoration comedy genre in *Restoration* offers particular insight into Stoppard's own invocation of the pastoral in his play.

In Chapter 5 (*Indian Ink*), the wider context of postcolonialism and imperialism is considered with reference again to Edgar's *Destiny* and to Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*. The introduction also reflects on Stoppard's use of an intertextual and polyphonic structure in his particular versions of history and examines the way in which he responds to and argues with previous dramatic representations of imperial India in a series of film and television adaptations of the 1980s, including *The Jewel in the Crown*, *The Far Pavilions* and *Heat and Dust*.

Finally, the introduction to Chapter 6 (*The Coast of Utopia*) traces Stoppard's increasing engagement with issues of freedom of speech and human rights which had been hinted at in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. It thereby contextualises the trilogy within Stoppard's own output and work overall and shows that (counter to some assumptions about his work) a high percentage of his plays deal with the history of political struggle and with the political situation of Eastern Europe in particular. In the broader context of representations of post-communism in British drama, the discussion is expanded by referring to aspects of plays by Edgar and Brenton/Tariq Ali that focus on Eastern Europe, while Stoppard's response to previous dramatic representations of pre-revolutionary Russian history – as in Howard Barker's Russian play, *Hated Nightfall*, and Trevor Griffiths' *Absolute Beginners* – is also considered.

Chapter 2

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead: Two Sides of a Coin

2.1 Context

Before turning to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (hereafter *R&G*) in detail, it will be appropriate to place Stoppard's creative response to Shakespeare in its broader context by reflecting on the Royal Shakespeare Company's house style at the time of the play's first production (1967) and by considering a near-contemporary adaptation of Shakespeare by a British playwright, Edward Bond,[5] whose *Lear* was presented by the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre in 1971, directed by William Gaskill. As Aleks Sierz points out, 'theatre is not just a response to the real world, still less a simple reflection of it; plays also relate to other plays [. . .] a contemporary play can be part of a conversation not only with its audiences but also with other plays that they might, or might not, have seen' (2011: 9). An historical and theatrical contextualization of Stoppard thus helps to describe the social, artistic and theatrical situation from which *R&G* emerges as 'a collaborative interpretation, one which often reworks a play-script to acknowledge contemporary concerns or issues' (Sanders, 2006: 48).

Roger Warren offers a survey of the shifting paradigms occurring in Shakespearian productions in the 1960s and considers the influential role of the Royal Shakespeare Company and its successive artistic directors in fostering new ways of staging Shakespeare. According to Warren, this time witnessed 'an emphasis on bare, uncluttered stages, which have acted as the

[5] I shall return to Bond in my discussion of the context of *Arcadia* in Chapter 4.

starting point for many different kinds of interpretation' (1986: 266). The early years of the 1960s were also significant as a formative period in the writing careers of Stoppard and Bond.

The Polish critic Jan Kott's 1961 book of essays, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, a 'resituation of the Shakespeare plays in light of what was happening in Eastern European politics' (Garber, 2008: 299), encouraged directors in England to reinterpret Shakespeare's plays as political allegories of modern times or in other markedly different ways.[6] Peter Brook's 1962 production of *King Lear* (with Paul Scofield in the title role) is a good example, using a 'neutral white set and hard white lighting to direct, as it were, a spotlight on to King Lear, who emerged as an arbitrary domestic tyrant, overturning Goneril's dinner-table in his rage' (Warren, 1986: 266). Brook's interpretation, greatly influenced by Kott's essay, '*King Lear* or *Endgame*', led Martin Esslin to describe the production as bleakly highlighting 'an image of aging and death, the waning of powers, the slipping away of man's hold on his environment: a great ritual poem on evanescence and mortality, on man's loneliness in a storm-tossed universe' (quoted in Garber, 2008: 243).[7] After Kott, 'Hamlet was no blond hero, but the agent of national self-destruction. Claudius was no devil, but a strong leader weakened by guilt and self-doubt' (Elsom, 1989: 2). In their season of history plays staged in sequence in 1964 to celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, Peter Hall and his company presented a *Hamlet* in which Elsinore was a busy administrative and political centre: 'David Warner's Hamlet was as unable

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[6] As Gary Taylor also notes: 'Some of the RSC's most acclaimed productions – the 1962 *King Lear*, the 1963 *Wars of the Roses*, the 1965 *Hamlet*, the 1970 *Midsummer Night's Dream* – are explicitly indebted to the theories of Jan Kott' (1991: 307).

[7] In considering the context from which *R&G* and *Lear* emerged, it is no coincidence that Stoppard's play begins on a Beckettian bare stage and Bond's stage directions frequently suggest bare stage imagery, for instance, 'LEAR*'s cell. Bare, empty*' or '*A bare electric bulb hangs from the ceiling*' (*Lear* 51, 68).

to cope with this society as his gentle Henry VI had been unable to cope with those barons' (Warren, 1986: 270).[8]

Nine years after the staging of Brook's *King Lear*, Bond produced his own adaptation, demonstrating 'the nature and interaction of social and personal circumstances as the guiding determinant of subsequent action' (Hay and Roberts, 1980: 104). It also functions as a multi-layered adaptation of both Shakespeare's and Chekhov's work. In Bond's own words:

> Why *Lear*? Partly because of the moral imbalance . . . if you look at these three girls, you'll find they all suffer as much and die like Lear, and are no more guilty than him – that in fact, they are like the three sisters. [. . .] The reversal of the academic moral/artistic/theatrical myth isn't enough, the making *reality* of Lear mythology isn't enough, because the play isn't to get its life merely from being a commentary on [*King*] *Lear*, or an attack on it or correction of it. The play must have a structure rooted in itself, which then throws light across onto [*King*] *Lear*, and *Three Sisters*. (Bond quoted in Hay and Roberts, 1980: 107–8)

As Hay and Roberts point out, 'what fascinates Bond is how King Lear as a figure contains elements both worthy of reverence (sacred), and worthy of condemnation (unsacred)' (1980: 108). Ruby Cohn draws attention to the different uses Stoppard and Bond made of Shakespeare to show in particular how Bond adapted Shakespeare's originals for explicitly political purposes, suggesting that in contrast to *R&G*, in which Stoppard is interested in linguistic and metaphysical questions rather than contemporary politics, Bond adapts 'certain Shakespeare plays to make them more relevant to the particular situation of what [he feels] is still unfortunately this sceptred isle' (Elsom, 1989: 161–2). Cohn summarises the plot of Bond's re-structured *Lear*:

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[8] As Gary Taylor states, 'David Warner's Hamlet is a disaffected 1960s teenager, rejecting the corrupt world of his elders, teetering between radical political commitment and total dropout withdrawal. The RSC affirms the pertinent contemporaneity of *Hamlet*' (1991: 310).

> Bond's Lear has only two daughters, Goneril and Regan [renamed Bodice and Fontanelle], and those two daughters remain as evil in Bond's play as in Shakespeare's; but there is a revolution against Bond's Lear led, eventually, by Cordelia. Cordelia becomes dictator of the kingdom and she has learnt nothing from Lear's suffering. Lear tries to persuade her unsuccessfully of a kind of democracy; and though old and blind at the end of the play, he climbs up to the wall that he himself originally constructed to defend his kingdom; and starts to de-construct it, if you will forgive the pun. He gets shot for doing so. But he has learnt. He is a more explicitly socially redeemed Lear than Shakespeare with all his ambiguities, chose to portray. (Elsom, 1989: 162)[9]

On the one hand, *Lear* can be seen as a 'paraphrastic treatment' of *King Lear* (Elsom, 1989: 26) that is strikingly at odds with the original, changing the place and period as well as the plot, tone and characterization of the hypotext and rejecting the classic idea of *King Lear* as a parable of noble suffering.[10] From this perspective, Bond's rewriting of Shakespeare's story 'into a parable of violent oppression and violent resistance' (Taylor, 1991: 355) offers 'a powerful incentive to see drama as continuous with social action' (Garber, 2008: 257), as Bond describes the emergence of resistance to repressive government: 'The play's conclusion is a measured account of the difficulty of action in an unjust society but it also demonstrates that action is the

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[9] Cohn describes Bond's continuous engagement with Shakespeare after his *Lear*: 'A few years later, Bond set Shakespeare on stage in *Bingo*, a very unflattering portrait, even when played by John Gielgud; and a few months after that, Bond based his *The Sea* very obliquely on Shakespeare's *Tempest*. *The Sea* begins with a tempest, ends with a young couple leaving the ancestral home of at least one of them to start a new society. [. . .] In these three plays, Bond seems to have moved from the condemnation of a feudal monarch, as portrayed in *Lear*, to an acceptance of traditional comic resolution' (Elsom, 1989: 162).

[10] For instance, the anatomization of Fontanelle's dead body (*Lear* 72–3), a scene to show violence as the tool and symptom of an unjust society, is also an example of Bond's recycling or 'literalization of figurative language, of metaphor' (Garber, 2008: 259) spoken by Shakespeare's apparently mad Lear who says to Poor Tom in the storm: 'Then let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds about her heart' (3.6.33–35).

only moral response in such a situation' (Hay and Roberts, 1980: 104). On the other hand, the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1982 production of Bond's *Lear*, which coincided with their production of *King Lear*, allowing the plays to 'read' each other, offered a new context for the Shakespearean source, while also introducing elements of contemporary relevance.

Bond's reason for rewriting *King Lear* was 'to supplant or overthrow' Shakespeare's canonical status (Fischlin and Fortier quoted in Sanders, 2006: 48) and 'to be more iconoclastic in intention, rewriting or "talking back" to Shakespeare as an embodiment of the conservative politics, imperialism, and patriarchalism of a previous age' (Sanders, 2006: 46), in contrast to Stoppard's 'celebratory or honorific approach' (Sanders, 2006: 46). Where Stoppard aims to engage an audience intellectually and to entertain his public by inviting them to stretch their minds, Bond's goal is to deliberately shock an audience into thinking 'rationally' about social issues and injustice as problems of great urgency: 'If they were sitting in a house on fire, you would go up to them and shake them violently' (Bond quoted in Innes, 2002: 170).

Labelling his work as 'rational theatre', Bond uses the stage as a means of disseminating social ideas and propounding his own political analysis. For him, literature is 'the interpretation of human life in its fullest, social sense – which includes the indissoluble union between society and individual' and art is 'rational objectivity, the expression of the need for interpretation, meaning, order – that is for a justice that isn't fulfilled in the existing social order' (Bond, 1978: xi–xii, xiii).

Although Bond admits himself to be 'an extremist' or 'an extremeophile', with a strong desire to 'find a way of integrating the individual dilemma with the social problem', his casual dismissal that, 'before 1956 all English plays were Home Counties rubbish' (Billington,

Guardian, 3 January 2008),[11] as well his earlier controversial statement in his preface to *Lear*, 'I write about violence as naturally as Jane Austen wrote about manners' and 'It would be immoral not to write about violence' (Bond, 1978: 3), suggests an approach in which confrontation and destruction don't just take precedence over, but become artistic and theatrical considerations. It could be said that he is responding to the ethics of a violent society in doing this (just as Jane Austen documented her own society), but it is significant that violence in his own *Lear* is seen to breed only more violence, rather than offering a means of eradicating itself.[12] It would appear that Bond is less interested in rejuvenating Shakespeare's work, or in shedding light on neglected features of its dramatic content – as in the case of *R&G* – than in doing violence to it. It is not surprising therefore that his dismissive, uncompromising comments on art and theatre have been met with equally direct and opposing comments, such that of fellow playwright, David Hare: 'But for a writer to correct Shakespeare just seems to me absurd. To confront him and take him on and say "No, you've got this wrong" seems to be fatuous, it's pedagogy, and I think Edward Bond's *Lear* is absurd' (quoted in Elsom, 1989: 167).

Whichever side one takes on these issues, however, Bond's *Lear* is instructive for its demonstration of political and social currents that were much in evidence in British theatre at the time when Stoppard was writing *R&G* and which he chose to disregard in favour of more universal and metaphysical themes.

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[11] Interestingly, Bond mentions Stoppard when talking about staging his own play, *The Woman*, at the National Theatre in 1978: 'It was a nightmare to do because the whole place was run like a biscuit factory. We had a run-through of *The Woman* and it was fantastic. I went back to see it after it had been playing for a week and the actors were doing it as if it were Tom Stoppard. They were doing "theatre". But drama is not "theatre"' (Billington, *Guardian*, 3 January 2008).

[12] The use of violence as a means of criticizing the use of violence is reminiscent of the phrase used to describe the First World War: 'The war to end all wars'.

2.2 Overview

> We keep to our usual stuff, only inside out. We do on stage the things that are supposed to happen off. Which is a kind of integrity, if you look on every exit being an entrance somewhere else.
>
> The Player, *R&G*, 1968b: 19[13]

The title of Stoppard's play (the hypertext) comes from a line spoken by the English Ambassador in the last scene of *Hamlet* (5.2.350).[14] This exit from Shakespeare's play (the hypotext) signals a point of entry into Stoppard's new work, in which the playwright takes the two marginalized characters, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and turns them 'into the leading characters of a Prufrockian play' (Macaulay, *Financial Times*, 18 December 1995) which 'follows the course of *Hamlet* fairly closely, but seen from a new angle' (Young, *Financial Times*, 12 April 1967).[15] First performed in August 1966 in an amateur student production (by the Oxford Theatre Group) at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, *R&G* was acclaimed by Ronald Bryden (writing for *The Observer*) as 'the most brilliant debut by a young playwright since John Arden's [. . . an] erudite comedy, punning, far-fetched, leaping from depth to dizziness' (28 August 1966, p. 15). The play was first performed professionally by the National Theatre at the London Old

[13] Further quotations from *R&G* (Faber and Faber, 1968) are parenthetically referenced by page number. Emphases and ellipses are in the original, unless otherwise stated.

[14] Quotations from *Hamlet* are from the 1604 edition of *Hamlet*, Cambridge School Shakespeare, edited by Richard Andrews and Rex Gibson, published by Cambridge University Press, 2005.

[15] *R&G* has been similarly described as '*Hamlet* inside out' (Smith, 2004: 136), 'off-stage *Hamlet*' (Miller, *Plays International*, February 1996, p. 15), '*Hamlet* as if from a back-stage Beckett's-eye-view' (Whitaker, 1983: 1), 'a rewriting of *Hamlet* in Beckett's style' (Genette, 1997: 259) or 'the *Godot*-style music hall duologue' (Kelly, 1991: 68).

Vic in April 1967. Press reviews of the original production and the revival in 1995 show general agreement on the ingenuity of ideas in Stoppard's reworking of Shakespeare's tragedy. In 1967, for example, it was seen as 'the most important event in the British professional theatre of the last nine years [. . .] the best first London-produced play written by a British author since Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* in 1958' (Hobson, *Sunday Times*, 16 April 1967, p. 49). Even detractors such as Robert Brustein, who dismissed it in 1969 as 'a theatrical parasite' or 'disturbingly voguish' acknowledged the play's 'noble conception' (Bareham, 1990: 93, 94, 93).

Most recently, along with the different London productions of *Hamlet* in 2011, by the National Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe and the Young Vic, *R&G* had its 2011 London revival at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, directed by Trevor Nunn (16 June – 20 August), after a short run at the Chichester Festival Theatre. In Nunn's production, while all the other characters were dressed in period costume, 'Rosencrantz (Samuel Barnett) and Guildenstern (Jamie Parker) wore discreet but unmistakable modern dress, including ornamented jeans and military-style high-street fashion boots. More explicitly than other previous versions, 'Nunn's production underscores the fact that the play is a prolonged meditation on death' (Billington, *Guardian*, 2 June 2011, p. 36) and Simon Higlett's design extended the play's Beckettian parallel by setting 'the coin-tossing duo in a black space, under the non-shade of a leafless tree, positioned like Estragon and Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*' (Clapp, *Observer*, 26 June 2011, p. 41).[16]

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[16] Anthony Callen suggests that both Beckett and Stoppard present the predicament of meaninglessness, highlighted by uncertainty about the most trivial things and by their failure to remember their own names: 'Like Beckett, Stoppard conveys this by having his characters play games, make conversation, tell funny stories, and he even has them re-enact their scene with Hamlet just as Beckett has his couple act the parts of Lucky and Pozzo' (Callen, 1969: 26). Callen further suggests that both plays jumble clichés as a means of conveying the main characters' bewilderment, while their confusion is often demonstrated by their cross-purpose conversations (1969: 27).

Ronald Hayman describes Stoppard's inclination 'to take his bearings [. . .] from existing cultural trends' as well as 'from existing literature', suggesting that *R&G* was launched 'on the tide that was ebbing away from the heroic mode' in the 1960s (1977: 33):

> In 1962 the RSC production of *The Wars of the Roses* adapted Brechtian production techniques to Shakespeare, humanizing the elements which in a fifties production would have been used as mere decoration. [. . .] The audience was persuaded to sympathize with the ordinary soldiers in their physical exertions, their boredom, their despondency. In 1965 [. . .] David Warner was appearing at Stratford-on-Avon in Peter Hall's production of *Hamlet* without a princely prince. Nobility was no longer the keynote. [. . .] Stoppard appeared at the right moment [. . .] for propelling two attendant lords into the foreground, while Hamlet (instead of being de-nobilized) became a minor character. (1977: 33–4)

Hayman argues that 'Stoppard was not the first playwright to incorporate generous slabs of Shakespearean dialogue into a modern text, but he was the boldest and the cleverest' (1977: 34). In an interview with the editors of *Theatre Quarterly*, Stoppard offered further details on the genesis of *R&G*:

> The chief interest and objective was to exploit a situation which seemed to me to have enormous dramatic and comic potential – of these two guys who in Shakespeare's context don't really know what they're doing. The little they are told is mainly lies, and there's no reason to suppose that they ever find out why they are killed. [. . .] I mean, it has the right combination of specificity and vague generality [. . .] the combination of the two should retain an audience's interest in some way. (Hudson, Itzin and Trussler, 1974; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 57)

While deriving meaning both from *Hamlet* itself and 'from its re-articulation within a new form' (Smith, 2004: 136–7), *R&G* further develops the characters of Rosencrantz and

Guildenstern by extending their roles and presenting their lives from a different angle.

Figure 3. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1995) Simon Russell Beale and Adrian Scarborough (photographer Robert Workman). (By permission of the National Theatre Archive.)

Compared to a 'sponge' by Hamlet and dismissed as instruments of Claudius in Shakespeare's text (4.2.5–31; *R&G* 83), the two colourless 'spies' are transformed into 'garrulous,

sometimes simple, often rather likeable chaps' in Stoppard's play (Berlin, 1973), where they become 'so much more than merely bit players in another famous play' (Stoppard quoted in Gordon, 1968; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 18). As James notes, 'the mainspring of *R&G* is the compassionate perception that the fact of Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's deaths mattering so little to Hamlet was something which ought to have mattered to Shakespeare' (1998: 222).

B. A. Young expresses a common critical opinion when he states that Stoppard 'has realised that the whole point of them is their lack not only of personality but virtually of existence' (*Financial Times*, 12 April 1967). From this view, Hamlet is still the prime focus in Stoppard's text. However, if we reverse this focus (as in *R&G*), Hamlet recedes into the background and we see Rosencrantz and Guildenstern dragged into their own tragedy while experiencing that of Hamlet through their eyes. In other words, *R&G* is about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, with *Hamlet* palimpsestuously appearing, retreating and reappearing. Rather than being thanked for their attempts to satisfy Claudius' request regarding 'Hamlet's transformation' and to 'gather / So much as from occasion you may glean, / Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus / That opened lies within our remedy' (2.2.5–18; *R&G* 27), their efforts lead to their destruction.

This is the Kafkaesque tragedy[17] which Stoppard extracts from his hypotext – a tragedy of

[17] In its portrayal of ordinary men's hopeless fate, of confusion caused by authority and of exhaustion from constant worry, resulting in acceptance of their execution, *R&G* is also reminiscent of (the Czech writer) Franz Kafka's novel *The Trial* (1925), in which the life of an innocent man (the bank clerk, Josef K) is totally changed by government and by officials when he is summoned by the police for an unknown reason. He spends the rest of his life visiting the police station without being charged, until at the end, he accepts his 'guilt' and is executed even though he still doesn't know why he is dying. Stoppard has commented that 'It would be very difficult to write a play which was totally unlike Beckett, Pirandello and Kafka, who's your father, you know?' (Gordon, 1968; reprinted in Gussow, 1994: 21). Interestingly, Shelagh Stephenson comments similarly when asked about the affinity between her play and Stoppard's *Arcadia*: 'I think ideas are in the ether – every time you write something, someone has just written or is writing something similar'. See Chapter 4, section 4.1, footnote 49, pp. 104–5.

ordinary people manipulated by forces and institutions beyond their control, anticipating Stoppard's later political plays (*Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, *Professional Foul*, *The Coast of Utopia* and *Rock'n'Roll*), in which individuals are victimized by exterior forces and their freedom is constrained and controlled, in the case of these particular plays, by the communist state (see Chapter 6).

Although *R&G* is set on the fringes of a well-known tragedy and touches on profound questions, its prime aim is entertainment, and particularly comedy, or in Stoppard's words 'slightly literate music-hall perhaps' (Hayman, 1977: 5). What initially drew his attention to *Hamlet* was neither the idea of 'doing any sort of pastiche' nor 'doing a criticism of *Hamlet*' (Hudson, Itzin and Trussler, 1974; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 57); as Martin White notes, Stoppard in *R&G* 'uses an existing play as a launch pad for what is, in effect, an entirely new work' (1998: 221). Whereas other modern adaptations of Shakespeare's plays (Charles Marowitz's *Hamlet* collage or Edward Bond's *Lear*, for instance) radically alter existing texts 'to sharpen the plays to fit the modern collaborator's political perspective' (White, 1998: 220), Stoppard does not change the story of the pre-existing text, but alters its focus, creating plausible off-stage actions immediately preceding or following the on-stage actions of the hypotext.

Such displacement of the narrative viewpoint is what Genette terms 'transfocalization' (1997: 287); *R&G* is 'a transfocalization of *Hamlet*' (1997: 292) precisely because it 'represents *Hamlet* as seen and experienced by the two supernumeraries of the title' (1997: 293). However, Genette's hypothesis that 'such a transfocalization [. . .] is inconceivable on the stage, since the dramatic mode is by its very nature incapable of focalization' (1997: 293) is questioned in the following analysis, since his assumption that the play was generated by the question of 'What on earth can these two characters be doing offstage while *Hamlet* is in progress?' (1997: 292–3)

overlooks the deeper significance of *R&G*. This chapter argues that Genette's analysis (as with that of many other critics and commentators) continues to focus on the hypotext and fails to realise the full implications of the transfocalization.

Although critical commentary on the relationship between *Hamlet* and *R&G* is readily available, little attention has been paid to Stoppard's further doubling or inversion of the Shakespearean hypotext. Not only does Stoppard extend philosophical themes and motifs, rhetoric, play of language and the comic role of the Clown/Gravedigger, but he also develops metadramatic devices explored in *Hamlet* (such as the play-within-a-play, stage-audience interaction, role-play, comments on the art of acting and theatrical illusions), while the players' brief dumb-show in *Hamlet* – preceding the play-within-the-play which 'imports the argument of the play' (3.2.122) – is prolonged to enhance the irony for Stoppard's two baffled title characters.

R&G exhibits Shakespeare's and Stoppard's words simultaneously on stage, in the manner of 'perspective representation' in a painting-within-a-painting, as with Magritte's *The Fair Captive* (Figure 4), shifting the audience's sense of distance and casting the puzzle of *Hamlet* into a new, decentralised perspective. This technique is similar to what White describes as 'shifting between 'inward' and 'outward' action' or 'constantly shifting the 'depth of focus' [. . .] to control audience response' used by Elizabethan playwrights. White suggests that such a strategy results 'in a pattern of engagement and detachment, a depth and intensity of contrast equivalent to the striking chiaroscuro of contemporary painting' or 'the general collision of moods and tones' (1998: 66), which is characteristic of early modern drama and, I suggest, true also of *R&G*.

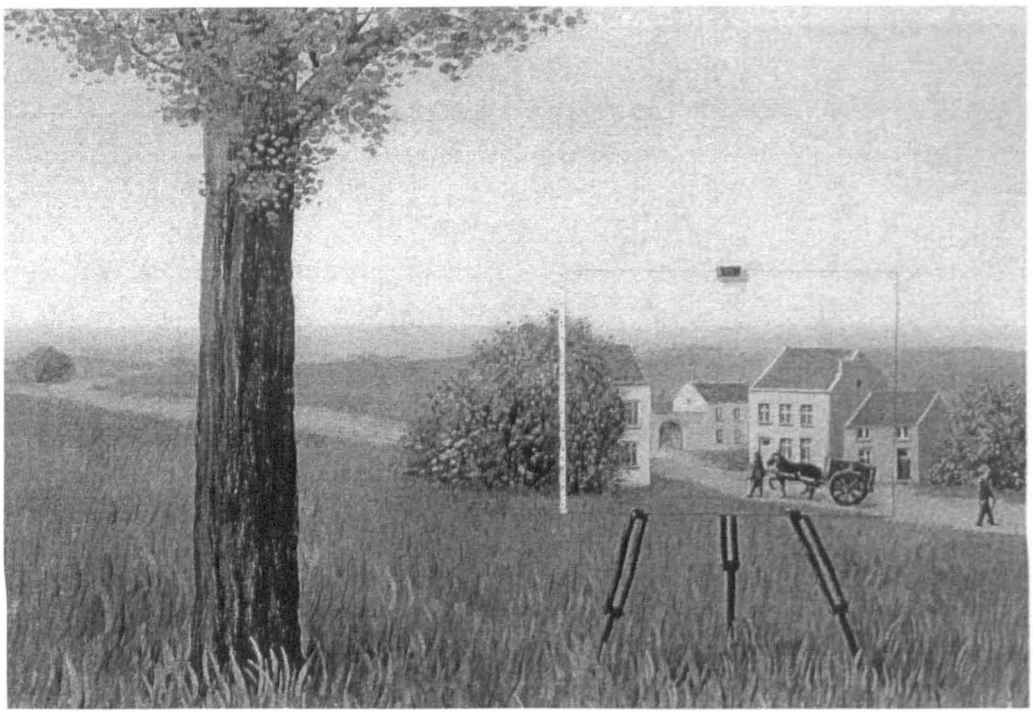

Figure 4. The Fair Captive, Magritte (1931), Hogarth Galleries, Sydney.

Further layers are added through the use of other literary allusions, such as Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1955) (hereafter *Godot*), Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1915), W. S. Gilbert's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* (1891),[18] Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*[19] and Osborne's *The Entertainer* (1957). References are made to concepts such as

[18] Gilbert's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, subtitled 'A Tragic Episode, in Three Tabloids, founded on an Old Danish Legend', is a one-act Victorian burlesque version of *Hamlet* (performed on 3 June 1891). In the first tableau, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (kin to Polonius) are summoned by the Queen (not by the King). In the second tableau, Hamlet's 'To be, or not to be' soliloquy is interrupted by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. In the third tableau, Hamlet's advice to the tragedians on acting is refuted by the First Player and the play-within-the-play in which Hamlet plays the mad Archbishop disturbs the King because it was written by him. Since to mention the play is death according to the law of Denmark's, the King draws his dagger. Hamlet begs his pardon and the King's order to send Hamlet to England instead excites Hamlet, while Rosencrantz and Ophelia, who are in love with each other, embrace.

[19] In his prison letter, *De Profundis* (1897), Wilde also referred to Hamlet's two university friends as characters who 'realise nothing' and 'bow and smirk and smile, and what the one says the other echoes with sicklier iteration' until their sudden death. Wilde adds: 'They are types fixed for all time. To censure them would show a lack of appreciation.

syllogism, the law of diminishing returns and the law of probability, though these scientific explanations for their predicament are mostly misunderstood by the two main characters, thereby increasing their confusion. Such literary and scientific allusions add intertextual depth and versatility but do not drown out Stoppard's own voice, which emerges from but goes beyond the Shakespearean and Beckettian models. As James observes, Stoppard 'abandons fixed viewpoints [. . .] in his intention to create a dramatic universe of perpetual transformations', so providing 'glimpses into the kaleidoscope of possibilities, devices by which you see further' (1998: 218, 219). Stoppard's stance in his use of hypertextuality is in the manner of homage to Shakespeare, who of course looms in the background, but as Alan Sinfield suggests:

> [while] Stoppard updates the Shakespearean myth, he makes space for his own writing. In adjusting the Shakespeare text, Stoppard does not aspire to dislodge it from its cultural space, but to alter the configuration so that there is space for him too and for his kind of writing alongside Shakespeare [. . .] [The play] touches the hem of Shakespeare's garment and some of his power is conducted into the new work. (1988: 131–3)

R&G is notable for its polyphony of dualities or a focus on 'two sides of the same coin' (13), in which a number of seemingly opposite concepts appear, which on further inspection are seen to be interdependent, but with boundaries that often blur and overlap. *R&G* also creates two sides for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who appear as characters of a play onstage and as themselves offstage. In Stoppard's new context, Rosencrantz is the reverse of Guildenstern and vice versa (though this distinction becomes confused at times), presenting 'two sides of one temperament' (Stoppard quoted in Gussow, 1995: 35).

They are merely out of their sphere: that is all' (1994: 949–50).

2.3 Metadramatic transfocalization: textual transformations from *Hamlet*

2.3.1 Transfocalization and the *mise-en-scène*

> [T]ransfocalizations would inevitably entail profound alterations of the text and of narrative information [. . .] Those alterations of the narrative content [. . .] would afford *opportunities of responding to questions left unanswered by the gaps in the hypotext*, such as, "While this is happening to X, what is becoming of Y?" [. . .] the transfocalizing hypertext [. . .] might be content with transfocalizing only those scenes that exist in the hypotext, but it would probably be driven to introduce them by the sheer logic of things. Scenes that had to be cancelled in the hypotext [. . .] would have to be replaced by scenes that are inevitably missing from the hypotext [. . .] – they would be required by the construction or characterization of the new focal figure. (1997: 287–8) (my emphasis)

Genette's 'conditions' may be applied to *R&G*, in which Stoppard makes use of 'opportunities of responding to questions left unanswered by the gaps' in *Hamlet* by reversing the narrative stance and creating scenes which in Shakespeare's text are either reported on-stage or described in a letter. Firstly, since it is not Hamlet but the two minor characters who are at the centre of the play, the stage directions in *R&G* when showing the equivalent scene from *Hamlet* are in reverse, 'the exits marked for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *Hamlet* become exits for all other characters in Stoppard' (Corballis, 1984: 33). For example, when the hypotext has '*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*' (4.2.4) the corresponding stage directions in *R&G* read '*Hamlet enters*' (82). Secondly, Hamlet's strange behaviour, which happened off-stage in Shakespeare's play and is reported by Ophelia to her father Polonius (2.1.75–98), is actually enacted in *R&G* ('*Ophelia runs on in some alarm, holding up her skirts – followed by Hamlet*') as in a dumb-

show, during which '*Ros and Guil have frozen*' (26). This is immediately followed by the pair's first appearance in Shakespeare's text (2.1.1–49) in Claudius's and Gertrude's presence, thus setting up the metadramatic structure of 'a play-within-a-play' which runs through *R&G*, similar to Magritte's picture-within-a-picture (see Figure 4, p. 42).

Scenes such as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's chance encounter with the players in Act 1 and their further encounter on the boat sailing to England in Act 3 are also examples of focal alteration of the play's hypotext, 'transfocalizing' scenes which in a sense replace missing and absent scenes from *Hamlet* and emerge in *R&G* as 'they would be required by the construction or characterization of the new focal figure' (Genette, 1997: 288). In *Hamlet*, Rosencrantz tells Hamlet that they overtook the travelling players and introduces them as 'the / tragedians of the city' (2.2.304–5), about to arrive at Elsinore, whereas in *R&G*, Stoppard creates the preceding off-stage action, showing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern meeting the travelling players.

Further changes of focus are evident in Stoppard's rendering of 'The Mousetrap' (*The Murder of Gonzago*) in *Hamlet*, which greatly affects Claudius, but of which no more is heard in the original text after the King has reacted with 'Give me some light. Away!' (3.2.244). Stoppard's re-creation shows plausible actions before the play, during rehearsal and after the performance.

2.3.2 Hypo to hyper: levels of transfocalization

In *R&G* Stoppard presents explicit and implicit transformations of the hypotext. On the explicit level, the fast moving, eventful *Hamlet* plot surrounds Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who appear to visit *Hamlet* and then to return to their own reality, where they hypothesize on what is happening. Shakespeare's text at times appears to overwhelm its modern analogue, as the

old and the new converge, as at Act 1: 26, 44–5; Act 2: 46–7, 64–5, 78, 83–4; Act 3: 117–8. When this happens, the two characters immediately fall into their original roles, using Shakespearean English, in contrast to the modern voices which they use elsewhere. The overall effect of this juxtaposition of two worlds, however, is one of symbiosis rather than division.

> The old text and the new text are not simply 'joined'; they exist as a colloidal suspension [. . .] the texts of Hamlet's play and Ros and Guil's play form two separate spheres of human activity which, like two heavenly bodies, impinge upon each other because of their respective gravitational fields. (Bareham, 1990: 86)

On the implicit level, the audience constantly builds on its knowledge of the hypotext, as it watches the two plays in parallel. While the characters are increasingly confused, the audience may become more confident, and turns of events which baffle the two attendant lords – such as the contents of the two letters to England in Act 3 – offer the audience a surprise. In this sense, a previous knowledge of the hypotext clearly provides the audience with enhanced enjoyment through anticipation, expectation and revelation.

Taking the layering concept further, *R&G* mirrors *Hamlet* in its themes, motifs and characterisation. The continual introspection of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern about the complexity of their confined experience at Elsinore, using obsessive wordplay and puns, wittily echoes Hamlet's more serious, reflective self-questioning and preoccupation with the life and death dilemma in the distracted, disordered and disturbed state of Denmark. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's acceptance of death ('To tell you the truth, I'm relieved') (117) and their final achievement of 'a moment's peace' (65) also echoes Hamlet's changed attitude, from his earlier 'To be, or not to be, that is the question' (3.1.56) to the later 'Let be' (5.2.196).

It is significant that *Hamlet* begins with a question, 'Who's there?' (1.1.1), and continues in this interrogative vein throughout. Such questioning is transferred to Stoppard's play, where 'Who's there?' (the question of identity) is a theme taken up by his title characters.[20] The image of the pair at the beginning of *R&G*, baffled with the consecutive turns of 'heads' over ninety times, also mirrors 'the tense and uneasy atmosphere' (Andrews and Gibson in Shakespeare, 2005: 2) of the opening moments of *Hamlet*, in which the officers of the watch (Barnardo and Marcellus) and Horatio 'with fear and wonder' (1.1.43) try to comprehend the appearance of what Barnardo calls 'What we two nights have seen' (1.1.32). In both plays, the action develops while searching for the answer to these initial mysteries or wonders.

> GUIL: But why? Was it all for this? Who are we that so much should converge on our little deaths? (*in anguish to the Player*) Who are *we*? (114)
>
> ROS: That's it then, is it? [. . .] What was it all about? When did it begin? [. . .] We've done nothing wrong. We didn't harm anyone, did we? (116–7)

Such philosophical questioning and scepticism is juxtaposed in the hypotext with an undercurrent of free-will, chance, time, divine intervention and death motifs, which are also recurrent in the new hypertext. Shakespeare indicates that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are subject to 'the hands of Fortune' (2.2.231) or the goddess of chance, a situation which is alluded to when, in their first meeting with Hamlet, they joke about in living in Fortune's 'privates' (2.2.225) only to be reminded by Hamlet that Fortune is a 'strumpet' (2.2.227) and should not be relied upon.

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[20] Raising questions at the outset and then attempting to answer them throughout the play is one of Stoppard's structural tools, such as in *Arcadia*, in which a question, 'Septimus, what is carnal embrace?' (1), starts the play.

In Stoppard's version, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern can be seen as the victims of chance and coincidence. Their summons and subsequent travelling to Elsinore, their brooding on the puzzling nature of reality and aspects of existence while at Elsinore, followed by their sailing to England and subsequent death, function as metaphors for life. The unnamed messenger who summons Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at dawn recalls the Ghost in *Hamlet* and alludes to Stoppard himself, who extracted them from Shakespeare's original text. They are searching on two levels: on the macro level they are searching for their identity and on the micro level they are searching for the reason behind the summons to Elsinore. However, their fate (as with that of Hamlet) appears to be decided by a divine force. As the Player says, 'It is *written*' (72), or as Guildenstern observes, 'We are little men, we don't know the ins and outs of the matter, there are wheels within wheels, etcetera – it would be presumptuous of us to interfere with the design of fate or even of kings' (102). Rosencrantz and Guildenstern bounce backward and forward at the hands of factors they cannot understand and cannot control, until at the very end, the sum of their philosophies is: 'That's it, then' (116), summing up their confusion about a subject which has engaged philosophers throughout history.

2.3.3 Hypertextual characterization

In addition to explicit references to *Hamlet*, *R&G* also extends Shakespearean wordplay and characterisation: 'Words, words. They're all we have to go on' (Guildenstern, 32). In both texts, words become symbols of themselves. In addition to expressing meaning, they are also used to evade meaning, as in the verbal tennis game between Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (in Stoppard's words) or when Hamlet mockingly responds to them about Polonius (in Shakespeare's words).

Hamlet enters. Ros is a little dismayed.

What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

HAMLET: Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

ROS: Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it thence and bear it to the chapel.

HAMLET: Do not believe it.

ROS: Believe what?

HAMLET: That I can keep your counsel and not mine own. Besides, to be demanded of a sponge, what replication should be made by the son of a king?

[. . .]

ROS: My lord, you must tell us where the body is and go with us to the King.

HAMLET: The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body. (82–3) (4.2.5–24)

Such semantic wordplay, in its manipulation of the relation between signs and the things to which they refer, serves only to cloud the original meaning. This is evident in many interactions between Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *R&G*, and is akin to the interactions between the prince and the Clown/Gravedigger in Act 5 of *Hamlet*. Hamlet and the Clown/Gravedigger have their own game of verbal tennis, in which the latter manages not to give Hamlet the answer he wants. In this sense, the uneducated Clown/Gravedigger matches the educated university student, paralleling Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's 'play at questions' (33–5), but also paralleling the exchanges between them and Hamlet, who also manages not to give them the answers they are looking for. Such facility with words serves only to obscure meaning, and in this sense, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are also, like Hamlet, trapped in a vicious circle of searching for and then evading meaning.

On another level, the Clown/Gravedigger in *Hamlet* makes comments about life and death that contrast with Hamlet's philosophy. He tosses up skulls and comments on life and death, on

Ophelia and on Hamlet, 'while Hamlet speculates with his characteristic witty cynicism on the original identity of the skulls' owners' (White, 1998: 177). Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are also very confused, whereas the Clown/Gravedigger is confident and certain, as is the Player in *R&G*. Stoppard transfers the comic commentary from the Clown/Gravedigger to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and the Clown/Gravedigger's confidence to the Player. This transformation provides comic moments in the manner of Shakespeare's original.

> PLAYER: The old man thinks he's in love with his daughter.
>
> ROS: (*appalled*) Good God! We're out of our depth here.
>
> PLAYER: No, no, no – *he* hasn't got a daughter – the old man thinks he's in love with *his* daughter.
>
> ROS: The old man is?
>
> PLAYER: Hamlet, in love with the old man's daughter, the old man thinks.
>
> ROS: Ha! It's beginning to make sense! Unrequited passion! (60)

Furthermore, the stage image of *R&G* as a whole takes on a resonance of its hypotext, as 'the fusion of words, gesture and positioning' between Hamlet and Clown/Gravedigger suggests the image of Hamlet holding the skull of Yorick (the King's jester):

> Within the emblem of the jester's skull Shakespeare embodies the twin poles of jest and death between which fluctuate the action of the play overall and the behaviour of its central character in particular. The stage image as a whole – created by a complex compound of action, language, properties and actor identity – establishes a further emblem that characterises much Elizabethan and Jacobean drama: the jester in the graveyard. (White, 1998: 178)

Dramatic irony pervades *Hamlet* and *R&G*. In Stoppard's text, the final act parallels and overlaps the final scene of *Hamlet*, but the action of the hypotext is re-presented with 'a slight

change of angle to it' (Guildenstern, 92). Stoppard's hypertext demonstrates that his previously almost unnoticed characters are subject to the same ironic twists of fate as those of Shakespeare's protagonist; their fates are intertwined. Transfocalized dramatic irony occurs when (in contrast to the hypotext) during their improvised role-play, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern accidentally open the replaced letter and discover their fate: 'on the knowing of this contents, without delay of any kind, should those bearers, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, put to sudden death' (113). This echoes Hamlet's words, 'That on the view and knowing of these contents, / Without debatement further, more, or less, / He should those bearers put to sudden death' (5.2.44–6). Guildenstern senses the unavoidability of their fate, 'the sense of isolation and uncertainty' (98) and the ambiguity of their situation despite his efforts not to lose control:

> Our truancy is defined by one fixed star, and our drift represents merely a slight change to it: we may seize the moment, toss it around while the moments pass, a short dash here, an exploration there, but we are brought round full circle to face again the single immutable fact – that we, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, bearing a letter from one king to another, are taking Hamlet to England. (92)

Just as Hamlet gives a list of four reasons for his revenge (5.2.64–6), Guildenstern lists four possible viewpoints, based on which he tells Rosencrantz to tie up the letter (101–2). Trapped in 'peril on the sea' (93), they are given a choice about their fate, for the first and only time, but they use their free will to morally justify their situation and sail on to England and death, ironically confirming their fate. If their journey and visit to Elsinore is a metaphor for being alive, then leaving Elsinore on a boat sailing to England is a metaphor for sailing to their death.

2.3.4 Metadramatic devices and the role of the Player

A crucial aspect of metatheatre or metadrama[21] (a term first coined in 1963 by Lionel Abel) is its self-conscious, self-reflexive re-presentation of life as already theatricalised. This is a recurrent device in Stoppard's plays and it seems to me that what he likes about metadrama is the notion that one is already playing a role in life and that theatre blurs or reflects the dividing line between real life and performance. *R&G* is a metadrama that reflects Stoppard's artistic self-consciousness, as he looks into his own medium and explores 'the usefulness of theatre as a metaphor for life' (Sammells, 2001: 110).

Figure 5. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1995) Adrian Scarborough, Callum Dixon, Alan Howard (photographer Robert Workman). (By permission of the National Theatre Archive.)

[21] The Greek word 'meta' means 'a level beyond' 'above' or 'about'.

R&G sheds light on the creation of dramatic illusion on stage and on the ability of such fiction to produce genuine emotion in its observers, as Hamlet discovers to his surprise in the Player's acting of a stage-death. The Player argues that an artificial death on stage may *look* more real, and is easier to believe in, than a death in real life ('it *is* the kind they do believe in – it's what is expected') (115). Rosencrantz and Guildenstern play their Shakespearean roles within Stoppard's text and then they take on the role of audience, commenting on the action they were just involved in or reflecting on the play of which they are also a part. In addition, they also use explicit role-playing in Act 1 (38–40) and Act 3 (100, 113) in an attempt to clarify Hamlet's actions and their situation.

Stoppard also uses a number of specific devices including dumb-show and play-within-a-play. As White notes, 'dumb-shows and other forms of wordless action [. . .] frequently convey complex narrative and character detail' in early modern drama (1998: 69), used by Stoppard's Player as a means of encapsulating the larger plot of the play through the 'play-within-a-play'. As the Player states, it is 'a device, really – it makes the action that follows more or less comprehensible' (69) providing clues both to the on-stage audience of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and to the theatre audience.

The dumb-show (68–77) in Act 2 of *R&G*, watched by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, occurs during the Tragedians' dress rehearsal in preparation for their court performance and clearly mirrors the plot of *Hamlet*. In Act 3, a further dumb-show is the enactment of a scene which is merely reported in the hypotext. The Player and his Tragedians are seen hiding in the boat, '*in costume (from the mime)*', presumably on the run after their play had apparently 'offended the King' (106). The mime presented to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at this point is an acting-out of the reported message – from which the play gets its title – in the final scene of

Hamlet, including the stabbing of '*the two "Spies" dressed in the same coats as Ros and Guil*' (116). This refers back to the two courtiers' fate suggested earlier by the Player's commentary:

> But where is the Prince? Where indeed? The plot has thickened – a twist of fate and cunning has put into their hands a letter that seals their deaths!
>
> *The two Spies present their letter; the English King reads it and orders their deaths. They stand up as the Player whips off their cloaks preparatory to execution.*
>
> Traitors hoist by their own petard? – or victims of the Gods? – we shall never know! (74)

The part of the Player in *R&G* is an example of what Genette calls 'extension' or 'augmentation by massive addition' from the hypotext (1997: 254).[22] This minor character from *Hamlet* takes on major proportions, as Stoppard uses the Player to introduce and comment on many of the major themes of his drama, expanding the Player 'into a single personification of all actors at all times', who also observes himself, in 'a display of acting and commenting on that acting as it comes to life' (Bermel, *New Leader*, 6 November 1967, pp. 29–30).

The Player also functions as a well-placed observer (mirroring Stoppard himself), giving self-referential remarks on the action of the play and on the conventions of theatre, being himself a metadramatic device standing between the actuality of the audience and the fiction presented to them. While inviting audience laughter, he discusses Greek tragedy ('The great homicidal classics? Matri, patri, fratri, sorori, uxori') (23), Renaissance drama and Shakespearean tragedy ('We're more of the blood, love and rhetoric school' or 'Blood is compulsory – they're all blood, you see') (23–4), theatrical art ('We transport you into a world of intrigue and illusion') (14), the acting profession itself ('We pledged our identities, secure in the conventions of our trade; that

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[22] Stoppard also uses extension in *Indian Ink*, expanding the role of Pike from his radio play, *In the Native State*.

someone would be watching') (55) and audience expectations ('The audience knows what to expect, and that is all they are prepared to believe in') (76). The Player's instructions on how to act in life and theatre ('Act natural') (58) mirror those of Hamlet to the travelling actors (3.2.1–36), while his comments on his profession also point to a deeper significance in drama, 'occasionally, from out of this matter, there escapes a thin beam of light that, seen at the right angle, can crack the shell of mortality' (75).

2.3.5 Two characters in search of and waiting for *Hamlet*

In addition to the play's explicit use of literary allusions to Shakespeare and the fusion of language, in which 'modern, slightly stylized speech, surprisingly, blends quite naturally with the excerpts from *Hamlet*' (Marcus, *London Magazine*, July 1967, p. 76), the texture of *R&G* is further enriched by its implicit references to other literature, offering further associations for the audience. As James suggests, it is 'the plurality of contexts that concerns Stoppard: ambiguities are just places where contexts join' (1998: 217). Quotations from Aristotle, Wilde and Eliot are integrated into the play's dialogues and stage directions, and there are affinities to Beckett's style of counter-contradicting dialogues and to the metadramatic resonances of Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of An Author* (1921) in its exploration of the relationship between the actor and the character on the stage. Whereas the title characters in Pirandello's play know that they are 'born as characters' from a play, however, Stoppard's title characters are unaware of this fact.

Stoppard has commented that 'Prufrock and Beckett are the twin syringes of my diet, my arterial system' (Hayman, 1977: 8). Like the inactive Prufrock,[23] Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

[23] As acknowledged in the National Theatre programmes, Prufrock's dramatic monologue in Eliot's 1915 poem contains allusions to Hamlet: 'No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be; / Am an attendant lord, one that will

are lost and lacking in motivation: 'Which way did we come in? I've lost my sense of direction' (31) and 'I have no desire' (7). While role-playing to try to understand Hamlet's transformation, Rosencrantz, who is 'only good at support' (95) and confused about his role asks Guildenstern, 'How should I begin?' (40), mirroring Prufrock's self-questioning, 'And should I then presume? / And how should I begin?' (Eliot in Abrams, 1986: 2175–6).

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern also resemble Beckett's Estragon and Vladimir in their duologue style, as Stoppard indicates: '[Beckett] picks up a proposition and then dismantles and qualifies each part of its structure as he goes along, until he nullifies what he started out with' (*Sunday Times*, 25 February 1968a, p. 47). *R&G* begins with 'Two Elizabethans passing the time in a place without any visible character' (*R&G* 1), reminiscent of the Beckettian bare stage, 'A country road. A tree. Evening' (*Godot* 1). The seemingly aimless betting on the toss of a coin also conjures up the image of Estragon and Vladimir, with their swapping of hats and their 'enforced passivity' (Hayman, 1977: 36), with 'Nothing to be done' (*Godot* 1) or 'nothing to show' (*Godot* 3). Just like Beckett's couple, who want to leave at the end of each Act, but can't, Stoppard's couple also remain: 'Ros: We could go. / Guil: Where?' (32), or 'Ros: Should we go? / Guil: Why?' (39), or 'Ros: . . . Should we go? / Guil: Where?' (85).

As Sanders notes, 'Stoppard creates his attendant lords in the image of Beckett's endlessly philosophizing tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, who for the majority of their play wait on a largely bare stage for something to happen' (2006: 56). Much has been made of the similarities between *R&G* and *Godot* in terms of confusions and frustrations, though Stoppard sees these as

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do / To swell a progress, start a scene or two, / Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool, / Deferential, glad to be of use, / Politic, cautious, and meticulous; / Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse: / At times, indeed, almost ridiculous – / Almost, at times, the Fool' (Eliot in Abrams, 1986: 2177).

less important than Beckett's method of expression and his humour:

> I can see a lot of Beckettian things in all my work, but they're not actually to do with the image of two lost souls waiting for something to happen, which is why most people connect *Rosencrantz* with *Waiting for Godot*, because they had this scene in common. [. . .] I wasn't thinking so much of what they are about so much as the way in which Beckett expresses himself, and the bent of his humour. I find Beckett deliciously funny in the way that he qualifies everything as he goes along, reduces, refines and dismantles. (in Gordon, 1968; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 21)

R&G goes beyond absurdist drama. In the words of Anthony Jenkins, 'life only seems absurd because of the limitations of one's own particular angle. The audience who know *Hamlet* know the game Ros and Guil have to play and are assured, as is Shakespeare, that "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will"' and Stoppard 'invites us to perceive the differences between his pair of attendants and Beckett's' (1989: 40). Both couples also have what Guildenstern calls an 'unremembered past' (6) and an uncertain future, but as Joseph E. Duncan points out, 'Stoppard's two courtiers encounter a predicament and represent an experience essentially different from those of Beckett's two tramps': whereas Godot never arrives, and Estragon and Valdimir 'face interminable waiting', Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's summons from Claudius (their Godot) arrives in the early stage of the play (Bareham, 1990: 76). Furthermore, in contrast to the two tramps, who fail to develop themselves and to whom nothing happens, the Beckettian void is filled for the two Wittenberg University students by placing the two characters 'in recognizable surroundings, the Renaissance context of Hamlet' and 'Shakespeare's play serves as a reference source by which Stoppard moves beyond the placelessness and the absurdity of Godot' (Freeman, 1996: 20).

2.4 Polyphony of dualities: 'two sides of the same coin'

> We're tragedians, you see. We follow directions – there is no *choice* involved. The bad end unhappily, the good unluckily. That is what tragedy means. (The Player, 72)

As Paul Allain and Jen Harvie point out, polyphony 'describes the inclusion – but not assimilation – of many voices or, literally, many sounds' (2006: 20). The concept of the polyphonic novel was introduced by Bakhtin, based on the musical concept of polyphony (Clark and Holquist, 1984: 240) and plays an important role in *R&G*, where it takes two forms: polyphony of other writers' voices and polyphony of dualities. Taking the first of these, the Player (as quoted at the head of this section) alludes to Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, where, in reply to Cecily's question about three-volume novels, Miss Prism insists 'The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means' (318). Such polyphony adds further layers to Stoppard's transfocalization of the Shakespearean hypotext, achieved partly through the Player's interaction with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and their self-referential comments on drama and the play itself, and partly through the play's selective use of direct or near quotations, creating a polyphony of other writers' voices, such as when the Player doubles as music-hall actor when he says, 'Don't clap too loudly – it's a very old world' (13), mirroring Archie Rice, the music hall actor in Osborne's *The Entertainer* who says: 'Don't clap too hard – it's a very old building' (1998: 54, 80).

The second form of polyphony can be seen in the interaction of dualities, symbolised by the concept of two sides of a coin:

GUIL: I don't suppose either of us was more than a couple of gold pieces up or down. (8)

PLAYER: For some of us it is performance, for others, patronage. They are two sides of the same coin, or, let us say, being as there are so many of us, the same side of two coins. (13)

The key image which Stoppard uses to enhance the polyphony of dualities and which appears several times during the play is that of flipped coins. The coin-tossing sequences in Act 1 function as Stoppard's prologue, metaphorically suggesting what the play is about, while being indicative of the dualistic themes of illusion and reality, fate and chance, and divine intervention and free will, themes that Guildenstern speculates on when drawing up his list of possible explanations for the over ninety consecutive turns of heads (6). In Act 2, the Player links coin-tossing with another duality, adding 'I should concentrate on not losing your heads' (57), and in Act 3, coin-tossing is resumed in Rosencrantz's effort to make Guildenstern feel better (94).

Despite being apparent opposites, 'heads' and 'tails' are in fact two parts of one unit, closely interrelated and meaningful in their interdependence. A coin has two sides, which co-exist and together create a complete whole. Hence, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have two roles: they are acting as characters in a drama (Shakespeare's context) and as actors themselves in reality (Stoppard's new context). Their roles are different, but one cannot exist without the other. The hand of Fate is at work, tossing their lives up and down, but offering no chance of victory. As the Player says, 'Life is a gamble, at terrible odds – if it was a bet you wouldn't take it' (107). In the end, it is as if Horatio is speaking for Stoppard when he describes 'accidental judgments' or 'deaths put on by cunning and forced causes' (118) (*Hamlet*, 5.2.361–2).

2.5 Conclusion

Sandra Clark points out that dramatic adaptation of Shakespearean texts 'had become routine as early as the Restoration in England; from 1660 onwards playwrights such as Nahum Tate and William Davenant changed plotlines, added characters, and set to music Shakespearean scripts for performance' (quoted in Sanders, 2006: 46).[24] Such adaptations and rewritings continued throughout the nineteenth century at the hands of actor managers such as David Garrick, and led in the twentieth century to what Katherine E. Kelly calls 'a surge in interartistic quotation, mimicry, and appropriation of various kinds in Western arts of the past several decades' (quoted in Levenson, 2001: 156).[25] This new burgeoning of intertextuality ranged from the subversive, as in Bond's *Lear*, to the celebratory, as in Stoppard's transfocalization in *R&G*. In Stoppard's case, his celebration of Shakespeare is seen in his 'plurality of contexts,' creating 'a dramatic universe of perpetual transformations' (James, 1998: 218), and in the persistence with which he returns to the works of his dramatic ancestor, from *R&G* in 1967, *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* (1979) and his re-writing of *R&G* for its film adaptation (1991) to his screenplay for *Shakespeare in Love* in 1997.

By reworking the original canonical text in a transfocalized form, Stoppard provides an afterlife for his demarginalized title characters, while supplementing the original play and providing another way of reading it. The significance of this (re)creative process can be

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[24] For those interested in the politics of theatrical adaptations and revaluations of Shakespeare's plays in the Restoration and eighteenth century and in the theatre's role in re-establishing Shakespeare, Michael Dobson's 1995 book, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660–1769*, is recommended.

[25] See Gary Taylor's book, *Reinventing Shakespeare* (1991) for information about the history of adaptation of Shakespeare, from the Restoration to the present.

illustrated further through Julie Sanders's reflections on the possible meanings of the word 'after'. Stoppard comes *after* Shakespeare in a number of ways:

> 'After' can be a purely temporal epithet; a work that is later in date chronologically necessarily comes after. But 'after' can also mean allusive to or referential [. . .]: in imitation of, in the style of, alluding to. Yet could we not also riff on the word further and suggest that to go 'after' something would be to pursue it or chase it? The drive of many of the appropriations [. . .] to go 'after' certain canonical works and question their basis in patriarchal or imperial cultural contexts is an important act of questioning as well as imitative in its modes and gestures. (Sanders, 2006: 157)

Through its creative use of the Shakespearean hypotext, Stoppard's transfocalizing hypertext updates what White refers to as 'a common place of Renaissance thought: "all the world's a stage" – *theatrum mundi*' (1998: 100) in its contemporary context and its relevance for a modern audience. 'Operating on two levels' (57), as Guildenstern says, there is constant overlapping of life and drama in *R&G*, as well as that of characters. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are common people with common misconceptions, whose only certainty seems to be 'the uncertainty of being left to other people's [devices]' (58). In the end, by dealing with life through this artistic metaphor, the play ironically suggests, as the Player reminds us, that although 'Uncertainty is the normal state' in life, rather than 'go through life questioning your situation at every turn [. . .], Everything has to be taken on trust; truth is only that which is taken to be true. It's the currency of living' (58).

As with all of Stoppard's plays, *R&G* stands on its own as a theatrical event, and background knowledge offers enhanced appreciation rather than being an essential component of audience understanding. For audience members who are familiar with *Hamlet*, the episodes from

Hamlet that emerge as palimpsestuous threads act as signposts, reminding them of where they are in the play that's going on in their heads. As Sanders comments, '[t]he joke is that the audience, unlike Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, know what will happen, because they know the script and therefore the outcome of *Hamlet*. Hence Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are already dead, even before they have started their play' (Sanders, 2006: 56). For those who don't know *Hamlet*, however, Stoppard gives hints at various points, having Rosencrantz and Guildenstern repeatedly discuss their situation and its uncertainty (41, 42, 102, 103, 108), as well as the dumb-shows by the Tragedians and the Player's running commentary which doubles and reveals the *Hamlet* plot.

Marowitz, with regard to the issue of knowing or not knowing the original play, reports that his *Hamlet* collage 'was played before hundreds of people who had never read *Hamlet* or seen the film, and their impressions (derived from discussions after the performance) were as valid, and often as knowledgeable, as those of scholars and veteran theatregoers' (1978: 12). He goes on to state that 'a collage must have a purpose as coherent and proveable as any conventional work of art' (1978: 13). While *R&G* uses the hypotext in a different fashion, its intrinsic qualities as an individual play also give pleasure to the uninitiated and encourage their capacity to learn and understand.

The relativity of perception and truth explored in *R&G* links to Hamlet's claim that 'there is nothing either good / or bad but thinking makes it so' (*Hamlet*, 2.2.239–40). By employing the hypertextual practice of transfocalization, Stoppard suggests the possibility of seeing things from alternative perspectives. In this respect, the play anticipates Stoppard's later work, in which he continues to explore the questions of perception or how we interpret what we see (or hear), as the playwright in *The Real Thing* encapsulates with the coffee-mug analogy:

> There is, I suppose, a world of objects which have a certain form, like this coffee mug. I turn it, and it has no handle. I tilt it, and it has no cavity. But there is something real here which is always a mug with a handle. I suppose. But politics, justice, patriotism – they aren't even like coffee mugs. There's nothing real there separate from our perception of them. So if you try to change them as though there were something there to change, you'll get frustrated, and frustration will finally make you violent. If you know this and proceed with humility, you may perhaps alter people's perceptions so that they behave a little differently at that axis of behaviour where we locate politics or justice; but if you don't know this, then you're acting on a mistake. Prejudice is the expression of this mistake. (*The Real Thing*, 1982: 53–4)

In *R&G*, Stoppard is acknowledging his debt to his artistic predecessors and showcasing through literary-dramatic palimpsests the inexhaustibility of literature.[26] As Sanders states, an 'interplay between appropriations and their sources begins to emerge, then, as a fundamental, even vital, aspect of the reading or spectating experience' (2006: 32). It is argued that Stoppard's use of metadramatic transfocalization and polyphony provides the playwright with opportunities for creation through the process of reworking and revisiting concepts that have achieved almost mythical status, while offering stimulus to audience members and readers, both informed and uninformed alike. Despite the comic presentation, Stoppard's play touches on serious issues: 'beneath its clever surface, there is a real existential quandary' (Macaulay, *Financial Times*, 18 December 1995) and 'behind the laughter, there is the deeper question that dignifies the laughter with a serious purpose' (Young, *Financial Times*, 12 April 1967).

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[26] There are recurrent Shakespearean motifs in Stoppard's works, for instance, the use of 'Sonnet 18' in *Travesties* and references to Shakespeare in *The Real Thing* and *Indian Ink*, excerpts from *Antony and Cleopatra* in *Arcadia*, and Turgenev's reference to Hamlet and Ophelia in *The Coast of Utopia*. *R&G* also points to the Wildean influence in his later work: for example, *The Importance of Being Importance* in *Travesties*, Wilde's cameo appearance in *The Invention of Love* and his use of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*. When he was a journalist on the *Bristol Evening World* (which ceased its publication in 1962) from 1958 to 1960, Stoppard declared himself 'a confirmed addict and admirer (literary)' of Wilde (Sammells, 2001: 104).

Chapter 3

Travesties: The Importance of Being

3.1 Context

The London theatre scene in the seventies offered the traditional, the innovative and the political, so that a positioning of *Travesties* in relation to its historical and theatrical context involves reflecting on Stoppard's choice of the 'intellectual comedy' genre in contrast to overtly political dramatists such as David Edgar and David Hare. The comic tradition was maintained and developed by playwrights such as Stoppard and Alan Ayckbourn[27] who shared with political dramatists the goal of portraying society while shaping the British theatrical landscape in their own ways. It is therefore telling, as Katherine E. Kelly points out, that in addition to his 'insistent use of the open-ended debate structure' as an 'expression of his resistance of didacticism', Stoppard's use of the comic sub-genre of parody gave him 'the means to engage the literary past in a particularly controlled way while avoiding didactic and explicit statements of his opinion of that past' (Kelly, 1991: 4). As Michael Billington states: 'What was intriguing about Stoppard was that he emerged at a time when dramatists were increasingly defined by their subjective angst or their political anxiety; yet he seemed to have no particular axe to grind' (2007: 200). It is also worth noting that Ayckbourn's comedy continues to revolve around the English middle-classes while Stoppard uses the form for very different purposes, and that while Michael Frayn,

[27] Ayckbourn made his successful West End debut with *Relatively Speaking* in 1967 – the same year as Stoppard's breakthrough with *R&G*.

too, shows similarities to Stoppard in using the West End to discuss intellectual ideas, his science play *Copenhagen* (1998), which might have been influenced by Stoppard's earlier plays *Hapgood* and *Arcadia*, is not a comedy.

Edgar and Hare belonged to a new wave of 'social-realist' dramatists who were influenced by Bertolt Brecht's epic dramaturgy that had first been seen in London in the Berliner Ensemble's London performances in the 1956 World Theatre season. This included the radical 'distancing' techniques of staging developed by Brecht, which offered 'an anti-illusionistic model for theatrical immediacy and directness' (Innes, 2002: 114), as well as episodic construction and historical framing devices. Their influence can be seen much in agit-prop drama, and in a more nuanced form in Edgar's *Destiny* (1976), a study of fascism and racism that juxtaposes attitudes in the seventies to attitudes in the forties and which contains 20 episodic scenes in three acts. The play was first performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company at The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon and then transferred to the Aldwych Theatre, London in May 1977 – about 3 years after the staging of *Travesties.* Hare's *Fanshen* (1975), a play about the processes of the Chinese Revolution, is also in episodic format and was an adaptation for the Joint Stock Theatre Company of William Hinton's book of the same title. Both plays sought to provide an explicitly socio-political analysis of society, 'challenging the social status quo and promoting alternative agendas' (Lennard and Luckhurst, 2002: 98).

For Hare and Edgar, the use of epic elements in their stagecraft was intended to 'present what aspires to be a recognisable picture of human behaviour as it is commonly observed – but, unlike naturalistic drama [. . .] within an overall social-historical framework' (Edgar, 1997: viii). Seeing events as essentially 'man-made', and therefore capable of being changed, they focused on the causes underlying particular historical and social situations and took their inspiration from

life, rather than from literature or artifice,[28] whereas Stoppard engages with the literary and theatrical past as a means of examining how art can influence society through its capacity to construe and delineate reality. Edgar's approach was to combine a recognizable situation with fictional characters, so that *Destiny* presents 'an analysis of British society in the seventies, and in particular of those sections of society who were then (and might again in the future) tend towards support for an emerging neo-fascist organisation, and of the response that other forces in society were mounting or might mount against such a movement' (Edgar, 1997: viii). The epic techniques used, in Edgar's words, 'are all basically engaged in the project of explaining social phenomena, of making superficially irrational and in some cases seemingly arbitrary behaviour emotionally and intellectually intelligible to an audience' (1997: ix).

Hare presents the Maoist revolution as a positive, idealistic model for change in *Fanshen*, which is emphasised by the flag-waving Agitprop[29] finale signalling the victory of the Communist Party: '*a superb massive groundswell of music*' and '*Banners flood down so that the whole stage is surrounded in red*' (*Fanshen* 102).[30] This combination of documentary with Agitprop demonstrates the principles of avoiding theatrical illusion and using the stage as a realistic image of society, which are clearly outlined at the beginning of the play when the actors inform the audience of their roles, stressing that the play is a re-enactment of historical facts: 'It

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[28] It is ironic that Hare relied on literature (Hinton's book) in *Fanshen*, and that the 'true stories' that it contained later turned out to be false, as Hinton discovered on revisiting the area. The political intentions of the documentary format were consequently (however unintentionally) based on fiction.

[29] Agitprop (agitation/propaganda) theatre 'grew largely out of the Marxist and labour movement and amateur workers' theatre' and 'used two-dimensional characters, often treated allegorically, in short sketches, with songs and narration to demonstrate an overt social message. These plays had a historical perspective only to the extent that they usually set out to expose an existing social injustice' (Palmer, 1998: 214), as featured in *Fanshen*.

[30] Quotations from *Fanshen* are from *David Hare: Plays Two*, published by Faber & Faber in 1997.

tells how a backward peasantry was given the chance to use techniques of public appraisal and self-criticism to take control of their own affairs. At the heart of it is the eternal question of how a democracy should police itself to ensure that it is genuinely democratic' (Hare, 1997: vii–viii).

These two plays, employing only minimal props and lighting, set out to encourage audience members to be detached observers and to take an objective viewpoint on the political causes of the characters rather than identifying with them emotionally, or where emotions were aroused, they were not to be what Brecht termed 'culinary', aroused simply to satisfy a need. The aim was to facilitate a direct on-stage treatment of the urgent, predominant socio-political concerns of the time and to this end *Fanshen* opens with a direct address to the audience:

> The village of Long Bow is situated four hundred miles south-west of Peking. One thousand people live there. In 1946 nearly all the people lived off the land. Landlords claimed from fifty to seventy per cent of their tenants' crop in rent. The rate of interest on loans went as high as one hundred per cent every twenty days. I am Ch'ung-lai's wife. I have no land. (*Fanshen* 6)

As specified in Hare's stage directions, actors play multiple roles, '*about nine actors taking the thirty or so parts*' (*Fanshen* 5), and introduce themselves and other characters in a metatheatrical way: '*In a series of tableaux on the platform Hu Hsueh-chen, her husband and T'ien-ming act out the story that Ch'ung-lai's wife tells*' (*Fanshen* 37). Similarly in *Destiny*, information about the main characters is given directly to the audience by the role-playing actors, 'in Kiplingesque verse monologues' (Innes, 2002: 183), as for example in Dennis Turner's speech:

> In '47. Came on home.
> Sergeant Turner, to a Midlands town.

Another England, brash and bold,
A new world, brave and bright and cold.
The Sergeant looks at England, and it's changed before his eyes;
Old virtues, thrift and prudence, are increasingly despised;
Old values are devalued as the currency inflates,
Old certainties are scoffed at by the new sophisticates:
And big capital and labour wield an ever-bigger clout,
And it's him that's in the middle and it's him that's losing out –
Sergeant Turner, NCO:
Where's he going? Doesn't know. (*Destiny* 336)[31]

Fanshen also employs placard-slogans and banners to establish the situation, in the manner of Brecht's own production of *Mother Courage and Her Children*, and in doing so invites the audience to consider 'how' rather than 'what' happens, as in: 'The forming of the Peasants' Association', 'They stopped paying rent' or 'Yu-lai and Wen-te return to Long Bow' (*Fanshen* 17, 21, 81), and to indicate the passing of time: 'They talked for three days' or 'They talked for eight hours' (*Fanshen* 20, 90). Banners with texts were also used to summarise the political point of a scene: 'Never trust a landlord, never protect a landlord, there is only one road and that is to struggle against them' (*Fanshen* 28). This sparse minimalism was an alienating factor that, along with the exotic setting, encouraged spectators to distance themselves from emotional involvement and draw their own inferences about governmental control or state authority.

Although Stoppard and his contemporary epic dramatists overlapped in their use of history as a parallel for today's world, their methods and interests were very different. It is therefore significant that Hare and Edgar later came to question the dramatic effectiveness of the rigidly political drama: 'what I am certain about is that the social-realist form has significant limitations

[31] Quotations from *Destiny* are from *David Edgar: Plays 1*, published by Methuen Drama in 1997.

when it comes to representing the contemporary world to itself' (Edgar, 1997: ix). Looking back on his 1974 play, *Knuckle* (though a very different play from *Fanshen*), Hare has remarked in similar vein that his political drive overrode his craft in this play: 'The stagecraft is immature. There are too many scenes and too many of them are set in the same places. The only excuse I have for its clumsiness is that I was writing with such political urgency I neglected the craft' (1996: xi). As Billington points out:

> By the end of the Seventies there was a sense that dramatists had deployed every possible means to analyse the state of the nation: epic, satire, social commentary, historical metaphor. Yet, although dramatists thrived on dissent and were stimulated by the perception of national decline, they mostly felt that their work had done little to change the situation. What British theatre needed was a fresh impetus, a new direction. (2007: 282)

In this regard, Stoppard's work, and particularly *Travesties*, seems to have been prophetic. A further statement by Hare about his later work reveals a new approach that mirrors Stoppard's concern with the question of subjectivity and his refusal to take sides: 'I ceased trying to bully the audience's reactions to what I portrayed, to demand a particular response from them, and instead let them decide for themselves what their feelings about the characters and their choices were [. . .] The whole point of writing plays is to express things which cannot be reduced' (1996: xv). Of particular interest with respect to *Travesties*, in which the protagonists explore differing definitions of art, truth and politics, and in which memory proves to be an extremely unreliable tool, is Hare's acknowledgment that 'Those of us who have spent our lives on the left are prone to banging on about something called "the truth". Yet, if we're honest, we know that the truth is a difficult thing to establish outside an unreliable context of memory and opinion' (1997: xi).

Howard Brenton's comments, made in 1992, on the situation that he and other politically inclined writers of the seventies had to face in 'the changing emotive climate of a culture' (Shank, 1996: 18) also corroborate Stoppard's scepticism regarding political grand narratives:

> The 'British epic' theatre with its 'issue plays' that my generation of playwrights invented and wrote through the seventies and eighties [. . .] has died on us. This is normal artistic life; what was once white-hot invention becomes dead conventions, mere theatricality. We need new ways of dramatising what people are thinking and feeling out there. Ironically, we could become rebels against the official orthodoxy we ourselves helped to make. (Brenton, *Guardian*, 7 April 1992 quoted in Shank, 1996: 16–7)

Positioned in relation to Stoppard, Trevor Griffiths was particularly important for his ability to analyse the possibilities and dangers of radical action through historical analogies and to express the disappointment, disillusion and despair that was evident in political drama of the 1970s. In *The Party*, presented by the National Theatre in December 1973 (with Laurence Olivier giving his farewell stage appearance as the hard-headed Trotskyite John Tagg), Griffiths shows the British revolutionary left in a satirical light:

> Griffiths focused more directly on contemporary Britain: in particular, the multiple reasons for the failure of revolution. [. . .] the fragmentation and divisiveness of the left, as well as its frequent hypocrisy, was one of Griffiths' central themes. Griffiths sets the action in the swish South Kensington apartment of a left-wing TV producer, Joe Shawcross, on the night of 10–11 May 1968: a date with its own built-in irony since, while students are clashing with riot police outside the Sorbonne in Paris, a group of London intellectuals are debating radical change. (Billington, 2007: 212)

In the play, Britain is represented as a society in which radical change is prevented not only

by conservative institutions but also by fractionalism and individualism within the very groups seeking to promote that change. *The Party* therefore combines regret for revolutionary failure with an acknowledgment that such upheavals are unwelcome to the British temperament. In contrast to 'the way Stoppard stops the play [*Travesties*] dead in its tracks so that Cecily can give a ten-minute lecture expounding Marxist theory', Griffiths in *The Party* 'allows political ideas to become both an expression of character and part of a dialectical debate' (Billington, 2007: 227). Billington's description of the two writers as 'antithetical' sums up this distinction well:

> Griffiths and Stoppard, perfectly good friends who I've seen warmly embracing each other, in fact make an intriguing antithetical pair: Griffiths, the disillusioned Marxist and formal traditionalist, and Stoppard the formal innovator with an essentially conservative temperament. Stoppard may not always be right about Marx. But, at a time of escalating uncertainty and confusion in Britain, he raised a question of passionate concern to many dramatists. Does art have any direct social or political impact? (2007: 227)

Alongside the rise of social/socialist epic drama, British theatrical comedy continued to evolve at the hands of 'another group of writers who pursued their own private vision within a relatively traditional framework: Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard, Christopher Hampton and Alan Ayckbourn, whom I would dub, for want of a better term, Contemporary Classicists' (Billington, 2007: 197).[32] This is not to say that these writers ignored the social issues which their politically-focused colleagues were presenting so starkly. Writers of comedy also use distancing techniques to produce their humour, though the social criticism in their reflections on society is often more

[32] Billington adds Ayckbourn to 'contemporary classicists on the grounds that his early work was driven by the joy and discipline of craft rather than the imperative of romantic self-revelation' (2007: 201), while referring to Edward Bond as 'a Disturber of the Peace' (2007: 229), in opposition to the Contemporary Classicists.

oblique and is achieved through distortion; serious or political themes are examined through artificial patterning and indirect commentary. In social-realist plays, on the other hand, everything is driven by the desire to depict social issues and explicit political standpoints. As with Lenin's view of art in *Travesties,* comedy becomes a tool of propaganda and political dogma.

Though Ayckbourn avoided any overt political intent, he gained a reputation (like Stoppard) for wit, intricate construction and an inventive pattern of playmaking, establishing himself as a popular dramatist as well as being an astute social commentator. His astringent social comedy or what he called 'black farce' has been described by Peter Hall as 'an accurate reflection of English life [. . .] a very important social document' (quoted in Innes, 2002: 378) or in Billington's phrase a 'Theatre of Recognition' (1983: 168). Ayckbourn's comedy, through its treatment of the desperation and frustration underneath (usually) marital incompatibility, functions as a critique of the social disguises, ostentation and doubtful moral standards of the time.

Ayckbourn's character-driven trilogy and satire of middle-class manners, *The Norman Conquests*, was first produced at the Library Theatre, Scarborough in June 1973 and then at the Greenwich Theatre in May 1974, before transferring to the West End, at the Globe Theatre in August 1974. The interlocking structure of this trilogy demonstrates the device of playing with time and space, as the three plays present different scenes that take place in the same time frame and the same location. Set in a country house during a weekend in July, events unfold for members of the three dysfunctional couples as they interact in the dining room (*Table Manners*), the sitting room (*Living Together*), and the garden (*Round and Round The Garden*). The actions in each play cross-relate and dovetail, filling in the missing gaps and sustaining the continuity of action while providing the audience with insights into each character from different viewpoints. In Ayckbourn's words, 'As soon as one play is read or seen, the other two plays are automatically

coloured and affected by the foreknowledge gained from the first – which may sound like some sort of warning, though, in this case I hope, a little knowledge is a pleasurable thing' (1977: 12). As with *A Chorus of Disapproval* (1984), in which Ayckbourn uses John Gay's eighteenth-century *The Beggar's Opera* as a theatrical frame and in which the hypotext is embedded as a play-within-the-play (similar to Stoppard's use of Wilde's play in *Travesties*), *The Norman Conquests* highlights, through its mixture of 'humour, precision and poignancy' (Shellard, 1999: 174), the emptiness of a society in which people are unable to communicate with each other.

Another important part of the tradition of British comedy that is also present in *Travesties* is farce (as in the Aldwych Farces of 1925–1933 and the Whitehall Farces of 1950–1969), which was being maintained and developed by Peter Shaffer's *Black Comedy* (1965) and Joe Orton's *Loot* (1965) and *What The Butler Saw* (1969). At the hands of such accomplished writers, the familiar ingredients of panic, concealment, disguise and mistaken identity (as in *Travesties* in which identical, mistaken folders contain manuscripts written by Joyce and Lenin respectively) became more than just well-timed theatrical engineering and led to the development of the genre of 'intellectual farce' as a means of exploring the English psyche. In this context, Terry Johnson's *Insignificance* (1982) is particularly relevant in that it is a comedy similar to *Travesties* in structure, with four characters who bear a striking resemblance to iconic figures of the era – Marilyn Monroe, Joseph McCarthy, Joe DiMaggio and Albert Einstein (similar to Joyce, Tzara and Lenin in *Travesties*) – though they are never identified by name but are referred to as The Actress, The Senator, The Ballplayer and The Professor.

It can be said that Stoppard, in writing *Travesties*, was not only 'recognizing the nature of his talent and ability' but also 'actively and deliberately resisting a political imperative that required a display of social conscience' (Kelly, 1991: 3) through his choice of the genre of

comedy rather than explicitly 'serious' political theatre. In developing his own version of intellectual comedy rather than writing plays about immediate issues in the style favoured by Edgar and Hare, Stoppard resisted ideological dogma that set out to dictate his choice of medium, content or matter. Instead, his comic craftsmanship expresses an 'acute attention to literary and cultural history through the operations of parody', along with 'its resistance to monolithic stagings of "truth" and "meaning" through the conventions of satire and parody' (Kelly, 1991: 2).

3.2 Overview

> I learned three things in Zurich during the war. I wrote them down. Firstly, you're either a revolutionary or you're not, and if you're not you might as well be an artist as anything else. Secondly, if you can't be an artist, you might as well be a revolutionary . . . I forgot the third thing.
>
> Henry Carr, *Travesties*, 1975: 99[33]

According to Stoppard, *Travesties* dramatizes 'an ongoing debate with myself over the importance of the artist' (Wetzsteon, *Village Voice*, 10 November 1975, p. 121), asking 'whether the words "revolutionary" and "artist" are capable of being synonymous, or whether they are mutually exclusive, or something in between' (Hudson, Itzin and Trussler, 1974; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 63). As the title indicates, the play reflects on the absurdity and narrowness of both artistic *and* political dogmatism, typified by the characters' expansive discourse and self-asserting manifestos (including Carr's 'English philistine' manifesto), showing that the words 'political' and 'art' can take on many meanings. This is done through 'travesties' of the characters,

[33] Further quotations from *Travesties* (Grove Weidenfeld, 1975) are parenthetically referenced by page number. Emphases and ellipses are in the original, unless otherwise stated.

presented via a discussion play, using historical and factual sources,[34] including Lenin's return to Russia (February 1917), the launch of Dadaism (1916) and Tzara's 'Dada Manifesto' (1918). Joyce's writing of *Ulysses* also provides an important thread, along with references to a production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* (hereafter referred to as *Earnest*) by Joyce's English Players in 1918, which led to a lawsuit with Henry Carr, a minor official of the British Consulate who played the role of Algernon. Stoppard's play, which takes Wilde's late-Victorian comedy of manners as its primary structural, stylistic and textual hypotext, offers a broad perspective on artistic and political debates.

The multi-levelled polyphony of hypotexts in *Travesties* features the voices of writers from whom Stoppard derives renewed insights into the pleasure of literature and theatre. In addition to Wilde's comedy, there are allusions and references to other hypotexts by Joyce, Shakespeare, Gilbert, Dadaist poets and Lenin, which emerge as the characters discuss the meaning and function of art in society. Four of the characters in the play – Joyce, Lenin, Tzara and Carr – and many of the events are taken from real life, providing a historical hypotext which Stoppard pastiches, parodies and travesties. There are three plays in *Travesties*. On one level there is Carr's pseudo-memory play, or 'comedy of senile confusion' (*Travesties*, 64), which forms an outer frame, beginning and ending the play. On a second level there is 'the Wildean stand-up', with Carr as Algernon, while Cecily and Gwendolen appear with the same names, along with Tzara (taking on the identity of Jack Worthing in Wilde's play) and Joyce (as Lady Bracknell), replete with intellectual acrobatics, limericks, parody and absurdity. On a third level, there is 'the Lenin thread, the grafting of political reality on to the essential frivolity of the Dadaists', along with

[34] As Malcolm Page writes, 'Stoppard's introduction and acknowledgements to the text cite eleven books used as sources, also revealing that he received a letter from Henry Carr's widow' (1986: 45).

Joyce's claim for pure art. Lenin is only referred in the first act of *Travesties*, but the second act of the play centres around him and his wife Nadya, a strand which is interwoven with the continuing Wildean pastiche (O'Connor, *Plays and Players*, 1974, p. 34).

Travesties had its London premiere at the Aldwych Theatre in June 1974 in a production by the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), followed by its first New York production in 1975 (both directed by Peter Wood and with John Wood playing Carr). When the 1993 revival production of the play (using a revised version) opened at the Barbican Theatre it coincided with the premiere of *Arcadia*, 'giving Stoppard the distinction of being the only living writer to have had plays running simultaneously at the National Theatre and the RSC' (Hickling, *Yorkshire Post*, 26 November 1993, p. 15).

Travesties ironically mirrors the 'existing cultural trends' of British theatre in the seventies (Hayman, 1977: 33), being composed after 1968, when playwrights became 'concerned with the relation between theatre and contemporary events' and dramatists such as Bond who 'believed in the social function of the theatre and its capacity to effect change' and Peter Barnes with his anti-establishment attack on class-bound society were the main stream (Hodgson, 1992: 193, 197). Building on the precedents of Osborne's portrayal of contemporary British society, the Royal Court with its commitment to new writing had produced Arnold Wesker's *Roots* and Arden's *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* in 1959, followed by Joe Orton's *Loot* (1966), Barnes's *The Ruling Class* (1968), and Bond's *Early Morning* (1968). In the seventies, its production of Bond's *Lear* (1971) highlighted 'the appeal that the mix of political analysis, historical setting and literary appropriation held for many seventies playwrights' (Shellard, 1999: 161), an appeal that was evident in Brenton and Hare's *Brassneck* (1973), Wesker's *The Wedding Feast* (1974), and Barnes's *The Bewitched* (RSC at the Aldwych Theatre, 1974). The National Theatre's

productions of Peter Nichols' *The National Health* (1969) and Griffiths' *The Party* also reflected 'the period's obsession with plays that investigated the potential for revolutionary change' (Shellard, 1999: 161, 160).

Stoppard was criticised for his political standpoint of not joining this 'political theatre' movement, responding that 'One of the impulses in *Travesties* is to try to sort out what my answer would in the end be if I was given enough time to think every time I'm asked why my plays aren't political, or ought they to be' (Hayman, 1977: 2). Stoppard envisions social change as a long-term process, so that the action of *Travesties* does not focus on separate, specific societal issues, but introduces the political-literary-artistic discussions as varying threads. However, it does include bold statements about what was wrong with a society ruined by war, giving birth to extremist artists and revolutionaries who either used art to justify their subversive behaviours while denouncing traditions or to manipulate people as part of their Marxist social propaganda. Stoppard's work focused less on promoting any particular platform than on calling on people to re-evaluate their perceptions of art, society and man's relationship to the world around him: 'The Imprudence of Being' (63). *Travesties* answers Stoppard's critics by its refusal to 'take sides' in specific political disputes, offering instead a more general debate, in which the playwright presents and parodies opposing views with equal emphasis, allowing the observer to decide on the merits of the modernist manifestos and artistic idealisms declared in Zurich during the years of the First World War.

It is significant that Stoppard's plays continue to entertain and educate audiences in numerous revivals around the world,[35] while the political plays of his post-1968 peers, like the

[35] In addition to its 1993 revival at the Barbican (proceeding on to the Savoy in 1994), *Travesties* has been revived in New York (2005), San Francisco (2006), Seattle (2007), the British Library (2008), Toronto (2009) and Sydney (2010).

manifestos in *Travesties*, can now 'seem devoid of dramatic tension' (Shellard, 1999: 160). Stoppard views theatre as first and foremost 'entertainment', in clear opposition to the prevailing view among his contemporaries of the seventies and constituting in its way his artistic stance. As he told the *Theatre Quarterly* editors in a 1974 interview (when *Jumpers* was in rehearsal for its American premiere and RSC rehearsals for *Travesties* were just about to begin), the distinction between 'my plays' and other plays recognised as 'political'[36] was a matter of opinion and definition:

> [T]here are political plays which are about specific situations, and there are political plays which are about a general political situation, and there are plays which are *political acts* in themselves [. . .] There are even plays about politics which are about as *political* as *Charley's Aunt*.[37] The term 'political play' is a loose one [. . .] so that I don't think it is meaningful or useful to make that distinction between them and *Jumpers* – still less so in the case of *Travesties* [. . .] *Jumpers* obviously isn't a political act, nor is it a play about politics, nor is it a play about ideology. [. . .] On the other hand the play reflects my belief that all political acts have a moral basis to them and are meaningless without it. [. . .] For a start it goes against Marxist-Leninism in particular, and against all materialistic philosophy. I believe all political acts must be judged in moral terms, in terms of their consequences. (Hudson, Itzin and Trussler, 1974; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 63–4)

The final sentence in particular indicates Stoppard's deep belief in morality as the final

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[36] As examples of plays that usually come under this 'political' category, Stoppard quotes: Hampton's *Savages*, Griffiths's *The Party* and *Occupations*, *Lay By* (combined work), Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, and *Hello and Goodbye*, Hare's *The Great Exhibition* and *Slag*, and Brenton's *Magnificence*.

[37] *Charley's Aunt* written by Brandon Thomas in 1892 is a Victorian farce in three acts about a young man who dresses up as his friend Charley's Brazilian aunt. It is often used when talking about the English theatre as an example of a play that contains nothing apart from its plot and humour. Stoppard chooses *Charley's Aunt* as an example perhaps because it is the least political play he can think of.

yardstick for philosophies, principles and actions. This search for a moral base in a postmodern world of relative values is evident in all his works, providing the *raison d'être* for his hypertextual investigations into history, science, aesthetics, art, literature and theatre, while 'enlist[ing] comedy to serious purpose' (Stoppard quoted in Gussow, 1995: 30) as a medium for that search. *Travesties* demonstrates the relativity of truth and values by presenting a series of conflicting and sometimes self-contradictory debates on 'art' and the role of the artist in society, and in the process foregrounds the subjectivity of perceptions. In this way, *Travesties* challenges the dogmatic opinions held by 'political' playwrights, anticipating Jean-François Lyotard's 'incredulity towards metanarratives' (1984: xxiv)[38] and contributing to the debates going on around Stoppard by being his own 'radical' manifesto.

3.3 Plural hypertextualities: pastiche, mixed parody, travesty

> In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing.
>
> Gwendolen, *Earnest*, 2000: 345[39]

In using *Earnest* as its primary hypotext, *Travesties* (the hypertext) takes the form of 'pastiche', a non-satirical mode of stylistic imitation, 'in the same spirit [as]' or 'in the manner of' or 'a kind of *homage* [to]' (Genette, 1997: 98) its Wildean hypotext, producing a multi-layered palimpsest. Brooker sees pastiche as 'an imitation or copy of the style of an original

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[38] In his book, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, first published in French in 1979, five years after *Travesties*, Lyotard defines the postmodern as 'incredulity toward metanarratives'.

[39] Quotations from the play are from *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays*, edited by Richard Allen Cave, published by Penguin in 2000. Further citations are parenthetically referenced by page number.

object or text' (2003: 187), while Fredric Jameson defines it as replacing the earlier practice of parody: 'Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style [. . .] But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction' (1991: 17). Harmon and Holman, on the other hand, provide a definition of pastiche which is particularly apt for the discussion of *Travesties* as:

> a parody or literary imitation. Perhaps for humorous or satirical purpose, perhaps as a mere literary exercise or *jeu d'esprit*, perhaps in all seriousness, a writer imitates the style or technique of some recognized writer or work. [...] The term is also applied to literary patchwork formed by piecing together extracts from various works by one or several authors. (1996: 377)

In addition to pastiche, the play also takes the forms of parody (playful mode of transformation) and travesty (satirical mode of transformation)[40] of the play's secondary hypotexts – a mixture of earlier works related to the three principal characters. Genette designates pastiche as 'an exercise in *theme*' and 'travesty as an exercise in *version*' (1997: 81) and further explains the structural difference between imitation (pastiche) and transformation (parody or travesty):

> The parodist or the travesty writer gets hold of a text and transforms it according to this or that formal constraint or semantic intention, or transposes it uniformly and as if mechanically into another style. The pastiche writer gets hold of a style – an object that is a bit less easily, or less

[40] Harman and Holman define travesty as: 'Writing that by its incongruity of treatment ridicules a subject inherently noble or dignified. [. . .] In general, PARODY ridicules a style by lowering the subject; *travesty*, BURLESQUE, and CARICATURE ridicule a subject by lowering the style' (1996: 526).

> immediately, to be seized – and this style dictates the text. In other words, the parodist or travesty writer essentially deals with a text, and with a style only peripherally. Conversely, the imitator essentially deals with style, and with text only incidentally; the target is a style and the thematic motifs that it involves (the concept of style must be understood here in its broadest sense: it is a *manner*, on both the thematic and the formal level). The text he is elaborating or improvising on that pattern is for him only a means of actualization. (1997: 82)

From this perspective, *Travesties* is 'the imitative text [that] becomes a new production – that of another text in the same style, of another message in the same code' (1997: 84). Wilde's play is subtitled 'A Trivial Comedy for Serious People' and works as a gentle social satire on the hypocrisy and affectations of the late-Victorian upper class. In the same style, Stoppard's *Travesties* also works as a 'trivial comedy for serious people', gently satirizing and questioning dogmatism and autocratic attitudes during the modernist period of art by systematically parodying their grand manifestos, with their contradictions. To use Genette's words, the hypotext that Stoppard is elaborating or improvising on is 'a means of actualization' (1997: 82), setting up a variety of arguments among differing voices on art and politics.

Travesties largely derives from and alludes to extracts from Joyce's *Ulysses*, which is itself 'the archetype of the adaptive text' (Sanders, 2006: 5), using Homer's epic, *The Odyssey*, as a hypotext. For example, the Prologue (18) in *Travesties* shows Joyce's composition of the first paragraph of the fourteenth chapter of *Ulysses*, which consists of a series of pastiches, or as Stoppard's Joyce claims, 'a chapter in which Mr. Bloom's adventures correspond to the Homeric episode of the Oxen of the Sun' and 'which by a miracle of compression, uses the gamut of English literature from Chaucer to Carlyle to describe events taking place in a lying-in hospital in Dublin' (97). Another example of Stoppard's Joycean pastiche is that of catechism (which features in the seventeenth chapter – 'Ithaca' – of *Ulysses*), when Joyce questions Tzara about the

gist of Dadaist thinking (56–61) in Act 1. In addition, Old Cecily's 'yes, I said yes' (98) in the final pages of *Travesties* echoes and reminds us of Molly Bloom's 'yes, I said yes' (644) in her monologue in the final scene of *Ulysses*.[41]

In further stylistic imitation of *Ulysses*, Stoppard chooses a minor character (Carr) to drive the action of the play (as with Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*), making it follow his unreliable memory, in a Joycean stream of consciousness. In addition, out-of-character limericks parody Joyce as a politically indifferent artist, while his 'proudest boast of an Irishman [. . .] I paid back my way' (50) is a reversal of a line in the first chapter ('Telemachus') of *Ulysses*, in which Mr. Deasy tells Stephen Dedalus that the proudest boast of an Englishman is that, 'I paid my way' (Joyce, 1986: 25).

Travesties also parodies and travesties Tzara as a Dadaist 'decadent nihilist' (79), with his 'Dada Manifesto 1918' and his chance poems made up by 'decomposition'. Tracing the emergence of Dada and Tzara's performance in a Futurist exhibition of 1916, when he 'gave a reading of poems, conservative in style, which he rather endearingly fished out of the various pockets of his coat' (58–9), *Travesties* presents Tzara and his radical manifesto as historical hypotexts, propounding a distinctive view of art. Juxtaposed with this artistic revolutionary, are writings of Lenin and his wife (79–89), which promote a utilitarian view of art, as serving the Revolution. His '*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*' (76, 98) and his wife Nadya's *Memories of Lenin* (70), are both quoted by Cecily in her lecture at the beginning of the second

[41] The question of awareness of the hypotext arises here: if the audience hasn't read *Ulysses*, how does this impact on its effectiveness as a hypotext? I suggest that *Travesties* can be appreciated as a work of dramatic art in its own right, but that awareness of the hypotext has the function of enriching and expanding that experience. The concluding chapter reflects more fully on this question and on Stoppard's expectations in terms of audience participation (see Chapter 7, p. 252).

act. The play also quotes directly from Lenin's letters to Gorki and his other writings related to socialist art and literature in Russia, which were adapted from and further refer to Communist ideology and Marxist theory (*Das Kapital*).

In its double-layered structure, *Travesties* is also a 'travesty' within a travesty or a 'parody' within a parody. That is, on the play's primary narrative level it is a travesty of self-asserting memoirs in which the writer re-constructs events with frequent distortions, due to his personal prejudices and delusions. On the secondary narrative level, there is what has variously been called by commentators a *nested*, *embedded*, or *framed* structure existing within the protagonist's erratic memory, consisting of mixed parodies and travesties of the three equally self-asserting revolutionary figure-heads and their modernist manifesto writings. Double-layering is also evident when Stoppard parodies Joyce, who in turn parodies a sequence of styles from the history of English literature. It is significant that Linda Hutcheon sees parody as 'double-coded', installing at the same time as critiquing the parodied object, in 'its intense self-reflexivity of narration and its dense parodic intertextuality' (1989: 112).

Travesties is engaging not only because of the fact that 'we watch a writer's imaginative resurrection of three men in history, making them meet and talk in a way they never did, but also because [. . .] within the play particular episodes are played back, as in a film sequence, a number of times. This becomes both a device to provide us with information (on the progress of the twentieth century history up to 1917) but also to show us that at each and every point a writer makes choices about what to say and how to say it' therefore touching on 'the aesthetic problems of the representation of reality' (Wandor, *Spare Rib*, August 1975, p. 42).

The first act of *Travesties* includes several scenes repeated in the imitative mode of scenes from *Earnest* designed to initiate and offer different perspectives on certain topics. Firstly, at the

outset of the play, there is a sequence of Carr's exchanges with his servant Bennett about 'newspapers and telegrams' (26–32) in a stylistic and textual imitation of Algernon's conversations with his manservant Lane in *Earnest*. Stoppard provides a note for the scene which is repeated five times, and picked up again at the end of the play (95), which explains his dramatic use of 'time slip' devices in *Travesties*:

> *the scene (and most of the play) is under the erratic control of Old Carr's memory, which is not notably reliable, and also of his various prejudices and delusions. One result is that the story (like a toy train perhaps) occasionally jumps the rails and has to be restarted at the point where it goes wild. This scene has several of these "time slips", indicated by the repetitions of the exchange between* BENNETT *and* CARR *about the "newspapers and telegrams". Later in the play there are similar cycles as Carr's memory drops a scene and then picks it up again with a repeated line (e.g.* CARR *and* CECILY *in the Library).* [. . .] *At any rate the effect of these time-slips is not meant to be bewildering, and it should be made clear what is happening.* (27)

This invokes what Genette (1997) calls *metalepsis*: the breaking of narrative levels between diegetic and hypo-diegetic worlds, jumping forward or backward along the narrative dimensions. To accomplish this, the play employs elaborate visual and audio effects that emphasize this change of narrative levels, as Stoppard indicates in his stage directions:

> CARR *is now a young man in his drawing room in 1917. Ideally the actor should simply take off e.g. a hat and dressing gown – no wig or beard, no make-up – Carr's age has been in his voice.* (26)

> *It may be desirable to mark these moments more heavily by using an extraneous sound or a light effect, or both. The sound of a cuckoo-clock, artificially amplified, would be appropriate since it alludes to time and to Switzerland; in which case a naturalistic cuckoo-clock could be*

seen to strike during the here-and-now scene of Old Carr's first monologue. (27)

This initial pastiche is immediately followed by the second sequence of pastiche scenes (32–47) beginning with Tzara (taking on the identity of Jack) entering Carr's room and ending with Bennett's announcement of the arrival of 'Miss Gwendolen and Mr. Joyce' (47). This is repeated three times and corresponds to Jack's first act entrance to Algernon's flat in Mayfair at teatime, his inquiry about the 'cucumber sandwiches' laid out for tea, his expression of intending to propose to Gwendolen (Algernon's cousin), the inscription in Jack's cigarette case left in Algernon's flat, the revelation of Jack's double identity ('Ernest in town and Jack in the country'), and the identity of Cecily. Stoppard's elaborations include transforming Gwendolen into Carr's younger sister who as a disciple of Joyce helps him to write *Ulysses* and 'transcribes for him, looks things up in works of reference, and so on' (44) in the Zurich Public Library where Tzara 'had to admire her from afar, all the way from Economics to Foreign Literature' (43). Jack's cigarette case is now replaced with 'a library ticket' (44) which Tzara left when he dined at Carr's room, and 'to clear up the whole question of Jack' (44), Tzara reveals his own double identity, saying 'my name is Tristan in the Meierei Bar and Jack in the library, and the ticket was issued in the library' (45). Cecily is also transformed into a disciple of Lenin, and as a librarian is 'helping him with his book on Imperialism' (46).

In this second sequence of Wildean pastiche, Stoppard offers a series of debates between Carr and Tzara on the meaning of the word 'Art', juxtaposing Carr's 'bourgeois' rejection of Tzara's proposition that 'the word Art means whatever you wish it to mean' (39) with the Dadaist claim that 'everything is Chance' (37), and 'an artist is someone who makes art mean the things

he does' (38).[42] In their debates, Stoppard foregrounds the subjectivity of perceptions between language and meaning (38–9), using the third repetition of this second sequence of pastiche to introduce Lenin, who will be the focus of the second act of *Travesties*, and using Tzara's voice as an artistic revolutionary to reveal contradictions inherent in revolution:

> Well, as a Dadaist myself I am the natural enemy of bourgeois art and the natural ally of the political left, but the odd thing about revolution is that the further left you go politically the more bourgeois they like their art. (45)

The third sequence of Wildean pastiche elaborates on Jack's proposal to Gwendolen and her fascination with the name 'Ernest'. Stoppard uses this sequence of scenes to introduce conflicting voices between the two poets, Tzara and Joyce, gradually leading up to one of the most crucial debates in the first act, in which Stoppard uses a visual metaphor on stage to distinguish Joyce's 'pure' art from the meaningless anti-art of Tzara. Stoppard reveals the self-contradictions inherent in Tzara's stance by showing that his 'chance' poetry (54–5) is written with a purpose: to propose to Gwendolen. He is further embarrassed when his 'meaningless' poem succeeds in conveying its author's intentions more effectively than the original Shakespearean sonnet (53–4). This travesty of Dadaist ideas points ironically to the possibility of reading *Travesties* as a Dadaist play.[43] Demonstrating the Dadaist method of writing by 'decomposition', Tzara cuts his

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[42] 'Dada was characterised by anarchic play. The name "dada" itself ambiguously invokes a horse in French, "yes, yes" in Russian, and in many languages a sense of childish precocity and deliberate obstruction. Dada, of course, cultivated this ambiguity' (Allain and Harvie, 2006: 141).

[43] About his initial thinking on *Travesties*, Stoppard remarked: 'It might be nice to do a two-act thing, with one act a Dadaist play on Communist ideology and the other an ideological functional drama about Dadaists' (in Gussow, *New York Times*, 26 April 1972, p. 54).

Shakespearean hypotext into individual words, puts them in a hat and randomly draws them out again to create a sequence of lines. The new Dadaist hypertext, however, reinforces the theme of the source text rather than dissolving it. In similar manner, Stoppard takes historical and literary sources, mixes and re-arranges them and creates a play which, being a travesty of historical events is chaotic in appearance, but in fact demonstrates coherent meaning and organic unity in its construction. As Tzara comments: 'To a Dadaist history comes out of a hat too' (83). If such an interpretation were followed, then Tzara's actions in composing his sonnet would be an instance of *mise-en-abyme*, a technique that Stoppard uses in this play in various ways (see section 3.5, p. 93).

In the interview between Joyce and Tzara, Stoppard imitates Wilde's exchanges between Lady Bracknell and Jack, beginning with the line, 'Rise, sir, from that semi-recumbent posture!' (55). Stoppard uses the question-and-answer exchange between the two (55–61), to examine the origin and meaning of the Dada revolution, along with its settlement and demise in Zurich, its function as a bridge between Futurism and Surrealism, Tzara's involvement in the Dada movement and how he discovered the word Dada by accident in 1916 (61).

As the interview progresses, Joyce conjures up a white carnation made from Tzara's bits of paper, then silk handkerchiefs and flags of different countries, from the hat which Tzara used to create his chance poem. In their ensuing arguments (a good example of Stoppard's 'infinite leapfrog' of conflicting statements and conflicting characters), this on-stage visual metaphor juxtaposes Tzara's destructive anti-art and Joyce's constructive art and invites the audience to see Joyce as a 'magician put among men to gratify – capriciously – their urge for immortality' (62). Tzara's art is represented by the broken pieces of crockery smashed by him in order 'to reconcile the shame and the necessity of being an artist!' (62). By giving Joyce the last word, the play

suggests that although Tzara's anti-tradition revolution has historical significance, it is Joyce's emphasis on the continuing of tradition that ultimately lasts.

The didactic approach of *committed* art is parodied by Stoppard through his pastiche of Wilde's Cecily. Stoppard's Cecily is single-mindedly devoted to publicizing Marxist theory (69, 76–7) and Lenin's hard-line thinking (66–78) that would bring Russia 'closer to socialist revolution' and 'closer to the Communist society' (77). Cecily also commits herself to art as 'social criticism', emphasizing its 'responsibility of changing society', based on the belief that '[a]rt is a critique of society or it is nothing' (74). The political theatre of the seventies is satirically echoed in this social and political idealism and by addressing 'Cecily's Lecture' (66–71) directly to the audience, at the beginning of Act 2, Stoppard employs a Brechtian epic device popular with seventies Agit-prop theatre groups, effectively parodying both the form and content of the so-called *committed* theatre.

A further allusion to Agit-prop theatre troupes in the seventies (particularly to 7:84) appears when Cecily proclaims, 'In England the rich own the poor and the men own the women. Five per cent of the people own eighty per cent of the property. The only way is the way of Marx, and of Lenin' (78). However, the serious tone of Cecily is at the same time contradicted and trivialised by her appearance as a stripper through '*a partial Carr's-mind view of her*' accompanied by '*cabaret lights*' and '*the sound of the big band playing "The Stripper"* that comes '*[f]aintly from 1974*' (78) and by her description of 'the way of Marx, and of Lenin' in the comic manner of Polonius's list in *Hamlet* or the Player's in *R&G*: 'the enemy of all revisionism – of economism – opportunism – liberalism – of bourgeois anarchist individualism – of quasi-socialist ad hoc-ism, of syndicalist quasi-Marxist populism – liberal quasi-communist opportunism, economist quasi-internationalist imperialism' (78).

Stoppard's use of Wildean pastiche continues in the second act of *Travesties*, corresponding to the plot of the second act of *Earnest*. The first pastiche sequence (71–80) in Act 2 derives from Cecily's exchanges with Algernon – after his unexpected arrival at Jack's country manor house – about her love for him and her determination to reform him, and Algernon's ensuing encounter with Jack and their arguments over Algernon's Bunburying. The second pastiche sequence (90–3, 94) is based on the climax of Act 2 of *Earnest* – the tea-table arguments between Cecily and Gwendolen over their engagements to Ernest and the revelation of the true identities of Algernon and Jack.

The third sequence of pastiche (96–7) overlaps the scene in *Earnest* in which Lady Bracknell confronts Miss Prism on the whereabouts of the missing baby. Continuing the farcical element, Stoppard replaces the baby with Joyce's missing folder, which had been switched with Lenin's in the opening Prologue (19). In this last pastiche, a short dance sequence is used, effecting '*a complete dislocation of the play*', as 'CARR *and* CECILY *dance out of view*' and 'Old CARR *dances back on stage with* OLD CECILY' in 'a few decrepit steps' (97).

In conclusion, Stoppard interweaves in *Travesties* a well-known Wildean hypotext with a number of sub-hypotexts, using literary and historical pastiche, parody and travesty as a means of highlighting the inadequacies of dogmatic beliefs, both at the time of the play's events and in the British theatrical world of the seventies. This is achieved in the spirit of Wilde and in the manner of Joyce's stream of consciousness technique and his parodies of literary styles. As Stoppard has remarked (referring to *Arcadia*): 'My work is not about inventing ways to smuggle in all these improbable concepts. The subtext is actually the whole point, the only difficulty is getting the proportions right' (Hickling, *Yorkshire Post*, 26 November 1993, p. 15).

3.4 Polyphony of perceptions on art and politics

> There is very often *no* single, clear statement in my plays. What there is, is a series of conflicting statements made by conflicting characters, and they tend to play out a sort of *infinite leap-frog*. (Stoppard quoted in Hudson, Itzin and Trussler, 1974; reprinted in Delaney, 1994: 58) (my emphasis)

As in *R&G* (Chapter 2), *Jumpers*, *Arcadia* (Chapter 4), *Indian Ink* (Chapter 5), and *The Coast of Utopia* (Chapter 6), *Travesties* presents a diversity of views on the major themes of the play. These views, opinions and perceptions are explored throughout the play, with every character free to describe his or her 'web of belief' (Quine and Ullian, 1978) in the 'running debate on the function of the artist in society that is the play's theme' (Lewis, *Sunday Times*, 12 September 1993, p. 9/14). In this process, the audience is exposed to the 'art for art's sake' position through Joyce, the subversive 'anti-art' view of the Dadaists through Tzara, the 'art as social criticism' stance of the committed political writers of England in the seventies through Cecily, and the 'art subordinate to politics' position through Lenin:

> Most of all, *Travesties* to me was an opportunity to discuss modern art. I share Joyce's views on the independence of art, but the need to make a plausible and balanced dialectic required me to speak up on behalf of the Dadaists. This got me particularly interested in the revolutionary spirit. (Stoppard quoted in Lewis, *Sunday Times*, 12 September 1993, p. 9/14)

Travesties allows all the voices to justify themselves and to criticise each other, producing a polyphony of perceptions which is made more intricate by the self-contradictions of the protagonists and by the unreliable memory of Carr, which further clouds the credibility of the

strands. The fact that Stoppard both parodies and travesties these dogmatic assertions of faith, while giving them equal stage-time, reminds the viewer that the grand narratives of Modernism, epitomized by manifestos and autocracies, have been supplanted by a postmodern world which views nothing as certain or absolute, and in which decentralization allows previously marginalized voices (Carr in *Travesties*, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *R&G*) to have their say. As Stoppard has remarked: 'A truth is always a compound of two half-truths, and you never reach it, because there is always something more to say' (Watts, *Guardian*, 21 March 1973, p. 12).

This polyphony of perceptions in *Travesties* operates on (at least) three different levels, each with multiple strands. On the first level there are the three different perceptions of art during the Great War, enunciated by the three representative characters: Joyce advocates art-for-art's sake, while Tzara states that 'anti-art is the art of our time' (39). Stoppard counterbalances the arguments between Joyce and Tzara because, in his words: 'Temperamentally and intellectually, I'm very much on Joyce's side, but I found it persuasive to write Tzara's speech' (Gussow, *New York Times*, 29 July 1979, p. 22). These two voices are then juxtaposed with the 'socialist literature and art' advocated by Lenin, who dismisses non-partisan literature as 'an expression of bourgeois-intellectual individualism', asserting that 'literature must become party literature' (85).

On the second level are Carr's perceptions (mixed with his delusions and prejudices) on art, interpreted both through his own conservative middle-class male view, in which 'the duty of the artist' is 'to beautify existence' (37), and through his philistine response to *Earnest*: 'I don't know it. But I've heard of it and I don't like it' (51). On a third level, the play interacts with the audience's (or reader's) perceptions and interpretations, inviting them to interpret events according to his or her own individual associations.

Old Carr represents 'the ordinary man' when voicing his opinions against the other more

well-known characters, while his contribution to the overall polyphony is made more powerful by the fact that all the characters speak through him and through his faulty memory. The polyphony of perceptions therefore becomes a polyphony of Carr's perceptions of his own and other people's perceptions; the irony of his 'normal' or marginalized status is that the 'major' characters of the early twentieth century can only speak through his distorted voice and can see only through his distorted spectacles. The duality resulting from the presence of a character who both narrates at the primary narrative level (diegesis) and participates in the play as his younger self at the secondary narrative level ('*hypo*-diegesis') (Genette, 1997: 295), comically explores the instability of identity, and the unreliability and non-linear nature of memory.

Travesties recapitulates the Wildean epigram that 'memory' 'is the diary that we all carry about with us' (318) or as Beckett's Vladimir in *Godot* relates: 'Extraordinary the tricks that memory plays!' (2006: 50). Stoppard foregrounds the uncertainty of memory and the psychological tricks it can play in *Travesties*, though this is brought home to the audience only towards the end of the play, when Old Cecily tells Old Carr that most of his recollections (except the fact that he performed as Algernon) are imagined rather than remembered. According to her, Carr 'never got close to Vladimir Ilyich' (97), Joyce's production of *Earnest* was 'the year after – 1918 – and the train had long gone from the station' (97–8), Carr was 'never the Consul' and as he admits 'the Consul's name was Bennett' (98), and she 'never helped [Lenin] write *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. That was the year before, too. 1916' (98). Although Old Carr admits his mistakes, his reply is as Dadaistic as Tzara: '*What of it?*' (98), and at this point, Stoppard acknowledges his use of dramatic licence in his travestying of history to invent a farcical comedy; the polyphony of opposing and contradicting views that the audience has been watching was little more than an ill-remembered monologue. One of the functions of Old Carr is

to challenge the audience's perceptions, leading to subversion of their expectations about re-presentations of historical figures and Stoppard manages to evade arguments over historical accuracy by constructing the entire play within the fragmented mind and the erratic account of Old Carr. If Stoppard's voice is present in the polyphony of interweaving strands, then he might be heard through Joyce, but it seems more likely that his voice is in the whole structure itself, telling us that truth is subjective, that memories are unreliable, that there are always many sides to a question, that the 'signifier' (symbol) has no intrinsic relation to the 'signified' (meaning), and that simplistic grand narratives contain their own self-contradictions.

3.5 The foregrounding device of *mise-en-abyme*

Mise-en-abyme (from the French 'to put into the abyss') was defined by the French novelist, Andre Gide (1869–1951), as 'the representation within a work of art of that work's structure' (Macey, 2000: 276). In a broader sense, it is also used 'to suggest a bottomless series of reflections or repetitions, most graphically of the kind where a picture [. . .] contains a miniature of itself, which then repeats this image in ever smaller copies' and is 'commonly associated with postmodernism's assumption of the instability of identity, and blurred distinctions between author and character' (Brooker, 2003: 163). *Mise-en-abyme* is employed in *Travesties* to demonstrate the subjectivity of perceptions and the unreliability of memory and is prefigured in Stoppard's *Lord Malquist and Mr Moon*:

> On the table was a jumbled pyramid of tins identically labelled with a picture of a cowboy holding a tin with a picture of a cowboy holding a tin with a picture of a cowboy, and the words, 'Western Trail Pork'n'Beans.' There were about twenty of them. (2006a: 42)

> He [Moon] looked at himself in the mirror and his compassion for his image was reflected back into himself but it did not comfort him. When he leaned forward between the hinged mirror-leaves he caught the reflection of his reflection and the reflection of that, and of that, and he saw himself multiplied and diminished between the mirrors. (2006a: 87)

Stoppard also used *mise-en-abyme* in *R&G*, when he retold Shakespeare's story of *Hamlet* at one level, while retelling the story of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at another level. *The Real Thing*, another work of Stoppard's that uses 'metatheatre' or 'theatre pieces about life seen as already theatricalized' (Abel, 1963: 60), uses *mise-en-abyme* more explicitly, as Stoppard's play-within-a-play rediscovers the art of theatre and of the actor, demonstrating the power of illusion to transform life. Lionel Abel summarizes the value of metatheatre as follows: 'In the metaplay there will always be a fantastic element. For in this kind of play fantasy is essential, it is what one finds at the heart of reality [. . .] so in the metaplay life *must* be a dream and the *world* must be a stage' (1963: 78–9). Such features of metatheatre are characteristic of *Travesties*, which employs the device of a play-within-a-play, along with 'a self-referring character' Carr, who is aware of his own theatricality and is himself a dramatist, 'capable of making other situations dramatic beside the ones [he] originally appeared in' and for whom 'illusion becomes inseparable from reality' (Abel, 1963: 79).

Travesties keeps travelling from one level to another, going down from Carr to the other characters in the past, down again to their own stories, and then coming back again to Carr in the present time. Douglas R. Hofstadter has drawn attention to this concept in his *Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid* (1979), in which a whole chapter is dedicated to Strange Loops and Tangled Hierarchies. These are exemplified by the recursive and cyclical structure of

Travesties, along with the play's progress up and down the web of narrative levels, as conjured up by the non-linear nature of memory with its characters mirroring and repeating what the playwright does, a pattern in which the beginning becomes the end and vice versa, as in M. C. Escher's famous lithograph, *Drawing Hands* (Figure 6), in which 'two hands are in the process of drawing one another into existence' (Garber, 2008: xxxv). In similar manner, Carr draws Joyce into existence in his memoirs in *Travesties*, while Joyce draws the character Private Carr into existence in his book (*Ulysses*), based on the real Carr.

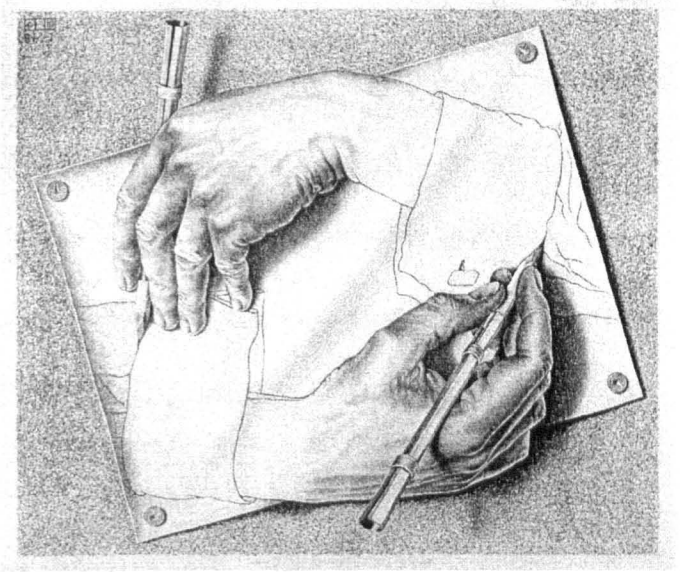

Figure 6. Drawing Hands, Escher (1948), M.C. Escher Foundation, Baarn, The Netherlands.

This foregrounds the (re)creative process, as well as the interdependent nature of past and present, fact and fiction, and illusion and reality, as in a series of works by Magritte, entitled *The Human Condition*. As Marjorie Garber writes, '[a] painting perched on an easel in front of a window merges indistinguishably with the "real" scene outside. The painting depicted on the easel is no more fictive than the scene outside the window-and the scene outside the window no

more real than the painting on the easel' (2008: xxxiv–xxxv). In this way the beginning becomes the end; the strangeness of these loops is irreducible.

Mise-en-abyme in *Travesties* is used as a paradigm of the intertextual nature of language (literature, theatre and life) and as a means of foregrounding the intertextual nature of art and life in the process of writing – that is, the way language (literature, theatre and life) never quite reaches the foundation of reality because it refers in a frame-within-a-frame way to other language (literature, theatre and life), which refers to other language (literature, theatre and life), ad infinitum. In *Travesties*, such 'infinite leapfrogging' functions both as a thematic and structural device. On the one hand, it occurs at the play's secondary narrative level (1917 Zurich) in the interactions and self-contradictions of the three seemingly exclusive voices (Joyce, Tzara and Lenin). Their conflicting arguments are then doubled when the stage moves to the play's primary narrative level (here-and-now), in which Old Carr is seen commenting on them in the light of his own viewpoints on art. Jumping downward or upward between the primary and secondary narrative levels and merging the two worlds in his fragmented and unreliable memory, Old Carr creates a kind of on-stage photomontage. Such crossing of narrative levels leads to structural and thematic *mise-en-abyme.*

Travesties is replete with images of *mise-en-abyme.* Old Carr's first long monologue (21–6) as narrator in the drawing room of his apartment, following the Prologue in a section of the Zurich Public Library, not only provides background information for the play (like a Greek Chorus) but also introduces various images of the three principal characters as well as his youthful self, which will be parodied or travestied throughout the play. Another example is in one of Carr's recollections: 'in Zurich in Spring in wartime a gentleman is hard put to find a vacant seat for the spurious spies peeping at police spies spying on spies eyeing counter-spies' (28). The

play also includes the infinite regress of language, suggested in the exchanges between Joyce and Tzara:

> JOYCE: Realising that this local bourgeois-baiting pussy-cat, Dada, had grown into a tiger standing for scandal, provocation and moral outrage through art, what, reduced to their simplest reciprocal form, were Tzara's thoughts about Ball's thoughts about Tzara, and Tzara's thoughts about Ball's thoughts about Tzara's thoughts about Ball?
>
> TZARA: He thought that he thought that he would ride the tiger, whereas he knew that he knew that he knew that he would not. (60)[44]

A number of types of *mise-en-abyme* can be seen in *Travesties*, the first of these being 'stories within stories' which includes 'acts of writing within acts of writing'. The Prologue (19–21), in which the three writers are seen in the library 'occupied with books, papers, pencils' (17), can be considered both as the prologue to Stoppard's play which tells Carr's story (framing story) and as that to Carr's story, in which he tells about the three figures (framed story).

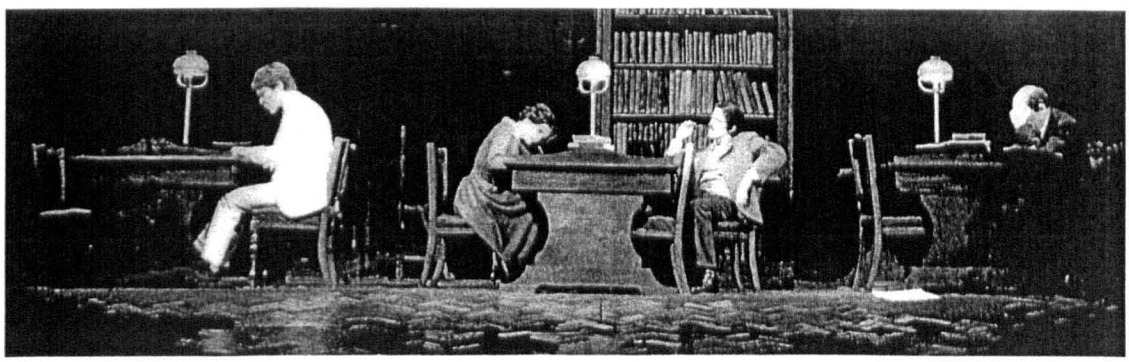

Figure 7. Travesties (1976) Bristol Old Vic Company. James Joyce (Miles Anderson), Tristan Tzara (David Yelland) and Lenin (Trevor Matin). Photographer Derek Balmer. (By permission of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection.)

[44] This exchange also echoes what Joyce wrote as one of the questions and answers in the catechism sequences in the seventeenth chapter of *Ulysses* (1986: 558).

In other words, Stoppard is re-writing the Wildean hypotext with multifaceted parody and literary allusions in order to write *Travesties*, in which Carr is re-creating his memories in order to write his memoirs, in which each of the three historical characters is engaged in the act of writing (in the manner of the Escher painting in Figure 6).

Another type of *mise-en-abyme* – 'a memory within a memory' – can be seen when Old Carr reminisces about his time in Zurich in 1917 as 'Carr of the Consulate', in which while indulging in Swiss neutrality, 'the entente cordiality of it' (41), his younger self (Young Carr) continues to reminisce about *his* time in the trench warfare in France before he came to Zurich (27, 37, 41). As Old Carr contradicts his own recollections, so Young Carr contradicts his statements about his experience in war, ranging from 'the wonderful spirit out there in the mud and wire' (27), 'never in the whole history of human conflict was there anything to match the courage' (41), to 'Jesus Christ I'm out of it' (41) and even to a Wildean inversion of the trivial with the serious in his blaming the war for ruining 'several pairs of trousers' (37).

The third type of *mise-en-abyme* in *Travesties* is that of 'a play-within-a-play'.[45] Stoppard's pastiche of the Wildean hypotext and its inversions provides on a macro level the structural,

[45] In *The Real Thing*, Stoppard quotes from John Ford's *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore* as a way of defining the sexual relationship between his two characters [Annie and Billy in Act 2, Scenes Six and Eight] and embeds Ford's play in his own to give a sense of the actual relationship between two actors who are playing these parts. According to Stoppard: 'It's determined by the playful idea of having people repeat their situation in fiction. For instance, the [Annie] part, there's a love scene with a person who becomes her lover except in fact they're in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. As soon as you decide that's what's going to happen, the woman in the rail scene has got to be an actress because she ends up acting in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. That's where the horse is, and that's where the cart is' (in Gussow, 1995: 42). Stoppard's comment on the continued revivals of his plays, 'I suspect [what keeps plays alive] is to do with the new one keeping the old ones alive' (in Gussow, 1995: 104–5) along with the old one invigorating the new one as observed in *The Real Thing* points to the mutual influences between hypertext and hypotext.

thematic and linguistic framework (plot, characterization, themes, styles, literary devices) for his hypertext. On a micro level Old Carr remembers his youthful self, playing the role of Algernon in Joyce's production of *Earnest* in Zurich. The play-within-a-play concept thus covers the structural and textual references to Wilde's *Earnest*, as well as Carr's memories of the production of *Earnest* in Zurich. It could be said that *Travesties* appears in *Earnest* and that *Earnest* appears in *Travesties*. However, *Travesties* can also be seen as including Stoppard's play *Artist Descending a Staircase* (written for BBC radio in 1972 and first staged in 1988), which also raises the issue of how to define art, debated here by the three once active artists (Donner, Beauchamp, and Martello).[46] In this play, Stoppard attacks the avant-garde for lacking traditional values, though the play's structure is in itself avant-garde and offers another example of strange loops. The scenes move back through time from the present to 1914, then return in graduated steps that are 'set temporally in six parts, in the sequence ABCDEFEDCBA' (Stoppard, 1990: 11),[47] mirroring the representative Dadaist painter Marcel Duchamp's Cubist picture of *Nude Descending a Staircase*. In a similar way, although Stoppard satirizes the extreme Dadaist anti-art for lacking traditional values in *Travesties*, the play's structure is as modernist as avant-garde Cubist pictures by Picasso and Duchamp, which foreground multiple viewpoints.

The infinite loop motif and its resulting creation of Chinese-box worlds in *Travesties* helps to foreground the ontological levels. The questions and nature of perception, time and memory are both explored and demonstrated in the structure of *Travesties*, in which the recursive or nested structure suggests a seeming paradox and its resolution in an abstract diagram (like

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[46] Stoppard calls *Artist Descending a Staircase* 'a dry run, in a sort of way [for *Travesties*]. It was two bites at the same apple. Sometimes the same bite at the same apple, actually' (in Hardin, 1981: 156).

[47] As Stoppard points out, the six temporal parts are: 'A=here and now; B=a couple of hours ago; C=Last week; D=1922; E=1920; F=1914' (1996b: 111).

Russian dolls inside Russian dolls) with the frame story left unpredictable, open-ended and without resolution. *Mise-en-abyme* is an important technique in *Travesties*, in which it is used not only to express the infinite regress of memory and perceptions, but also to show that everything exists within everything else and that all artistic creation implies intertextuality.

3.6 Conclusion

In *Travesties*, Wilde's comedy provides the stylistic and contextual template, while Joyce's novel provides most of its notable literary features. The text of *Travesties* itself is 'a dense Joycean web of literary allusions, yet it also radiates sheer intellectual *joie de vivre*' (Billington, *Guardian*, 11 June 1974). Stoppard reshapes the past, like Carr, and the result is an innovative style that strives to be entertaining and surprising, while also trying to discuss serious ideas. The new synthesis that emerges does not ridicule nor directly critique the sources, but instead reflects the sources in a fresh way. The effect produced is rich in comedy and irony, making the play '[o]ne of Stoppard's most brilliant conceits' (Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 8 September 1993).

As Terry Hodgson points out, *Travesties* takes as its subject 'the processes of writing' and 'makes acute observations about the nature of creativity and the function of art' (1992: 192). Each of the historical characters is occupied with the act of hypertextual writing (thus doubling Stoppard), and contributes to the polyphony of conflicting and contradictory multiple voices in the art, politics, and history debates embodied in the play. From these debates, the play raises further questions about 'the nature of the artist's, and human, identity' by presenting characters who are 'dual, delivering contradictory discourses' and by emphasizing different sides to them (Hodgson, 2001: 80). Furthermore, as Thomas Whitaker suggests, Carr 'who can produce neither

art, nor anti-art, nor revolution' emerges also as 'a travesty of ourselves' in his reshaping of the past (1983: 128–9):

> Living in the unstable and problematic world of time even as he tries to invent a fixed image of the past, Carr fluctuates between trying on historical costumes and requiring the figures of history to wear the costumes his own scrappy imagination dreams up. Perhaps *Travesties* asks us above all to enjoy – and through that enjoyment to purge ourselves of – a Henry Carr who seems to be each of us, at least in our more pretentious and evasive moments, as we try to make meaning out of our lives. (1983: 129)

Travesties demonstrates the infinite potentialities of what Genette (1997) calls palimpsests of second-degree literature and art. Between the layers of references and allusions, there is a constant textual and artistic dialogism between Stoppard's hypertext and its hypotexts. The recursive and cyclical structure of *Travesties* and the resulting infinite regress of *mise-en-abyme* contribute to the concentration or strengthening of ideas and themes explored in the play and create Chinese-box worlds which challenge our ontological levels through their blurred distinctions between reality and illusion (or between history and imagination), inviting us to reflect on another Wildean epigram spoken by his incarnation in *The Invention of Love*: 'Truth is quite another thing [from fact] and is the work of the imagination' (Stoppard, 1997: 93).

The question left unanswered by *Travesties* is whether the play was written as a serious exploration of an anarchic world, or whether it was composed as a light-hearted *jeu d'esprit* or both. The title supports the notion that the work has no serious intention, and is to be envisaged, like Wilde's play, as 'a trivial comedy for serious people'. Stoppard has remarked:

> I suppose you could say because it is a travesty of history. 'Gallimaufry' would also have been

> a good word for it – or, if you don't like it, you could call it a rag bag. It really amounts to a bit of singing and dancing mixed up with philosophical debates. (Lewis, *Sunday Times*, 12 September 1993, p. 9/14)

Nonetheless, the play is infused with satirical elements regarding 'serious' topics such as the use of art as social criticism or the Leninist utilitarian theory of literature. In short, the references to historical figures, the social and moral implications offered by the play, the artistic and political arguments, and above all the literary connections with Wilde and Joyce, combine to make *Travesties* highly radical. This chapter argues that Stoppard, like Wilde, is speaking from an aesthetic platform, framed in a contemporary 'comedy of intellectual manners'. Through *Travesties*, Stoppard places art above politics, since it represents the broader concerns of freedom of speech and freedom of expression. As George Orwell (1946) wrote, 'no book is genuinely free from political bias. The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude'. *Travesties* does not appear radical, yet it demonstrates Stoppard's liberalist radicalism in writing a play about the philosophy of art and aesthetics. Although not overtly involved with issues of political immediacy, Stoppard as a moralist goes to the root of political decisions. His apolitical stance is a political decision and in this context the creation of *Travesties* can be interpreted as Stoppard's manifesto for a long-term moralist validation of art.

Chapter 4

Arcadia: Order out of Chaos

4.1 Context

Arcadia (1993) is notable not only for its attention to chaos theory, fractals and the tension between the unpredictable and the determined, but also for its use of a particular historical moment as an intertextual starting point. Shuttling between a room in a stately English country house in the early nineteenth century during the Napoleonic wars in Europe and the same room in the present day, the play questions the ability of historians to be objective, while at the same time expressing confusion with the present and uncertainty about the future. Placing the action of the play in Derbyshire (the home county of Lord Byron) in the artistically flourishing Regency period, Stoppard uses modern scientific concepts to reveal the fallibility of biographical accounts of past lives, while introducing the then contemporary 'new science' of landscape gardening to raise the question of England's past and present identity, in what has been called a 'love letter to the continuing beauty of the English landscape' (Billington, 2007: 339).[48]

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[48] For a relevant study on landscape history in relation to *Arcadia*, see Timothy Mowl's *Gentlemen and Players: Gardeners of the English Landscape* (2000). The book offers a review of the instability and complexity of English landscape gardening, which was in a state of constant change due to the influences of aristocrats and gardeners, as mentioned in various dialogues in *Arcadia*. In particular, the interactions between Lady Groom and the gardener Richard Noakes provide an example of the creative tension between the two classes of people. The book suggests that a radical appraisal of the great age of the English Arcadia (dated by Mowl as 1620–1820), when an interaction of amateur and professional gardeners resulted in the gardens at Chiswick, Stowe, Castle Howard, Painshill, Stourhead and 'an astonishing host of lesser Edens, the "improvements"' (cover note). Interestingly, given Stoppard's love of the

Stoppard's attention to history in *Arcadia* parallels the fascination for history and memory to be found in previous works by other dramatists, such as Caryl Churchill's *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1978), David Hare's *Plenty* (1978) and Alan Bennett's *The Madness of George III* (1991). Bennett's play deals with the period preceding that of *Arcadia* and offers a new perspective on King George, who opened the Royal College of Art and contributed to the cultural and artistic wealth of Regency England. It is germane that Stoppard chose the Regency setting in *Arcadia*, since the 'major upsurge in cultural life' of that period, with its burgeoning of 'elegance, refinement, style and taste' (Cox and Swan, 2008: 10) places the characters at the turning tipping point between Classicism and Romanticism. The early nineteenth century (as was the late twentieth century, when Stoppard was writing *Arcadia*) was a period of great scientific and cultural development, often carried out by groups of amateurs and reflected in a whole range of literature inspired by, and deriving its content from science. For instance, Mary Shelley's Gothic novel *Frankenstein* (1818), exploring the possibilities of recent developments in galvanism and bioelectricity, is known as the first true Science Fiction story. Indeed, Mary Shelley's interest in the new sciences of the period and in the arts might be seen to mirror Stoppard's own interests to some extent, giving him further cause to choose this moment in history for one of the settings of his play.[49]

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game, the term 'Gentlemen and Players' originates to distinguish amateur from professional cricketers.

[49] As an example of the context created by Stoppard's interest in science and history, Shelagh Stephenson's *An Experiment with an Air Pump* (1997) is also a play about science, incorporating Joseph Wright's painting of a scientific experiment, *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* (1768). Taking place partly in the eighteenth century and in the 1990s, many aspects of this play appear to have similarities to *Arcadia*, although when asked about this by Martin White, Stephenson stated: 'I think ideas are in the ether – every time you write something, someone has just written or is writing something similar. Neither the director nor myself, nor any of the cast thought about *Arcadia* at all during rehearsals. But some of the critics did, and then we realised that there were similarities. Then Kate Atkinson wrote a

The early nineteenth century was also the heyday of literary magazines, as well as being an important time for exploration and discovery in the physical sciences, as embodied in Stoppard's character Ezra Chater's botanical expedition to the island of Martinique in the West Indies and the discovery of dwarf dahlias. Such developments are paralleled in the play by modern-day discoveries in quantum physics, chaos theory and mathematics, as history is presented as a fractal algorithm in which ideas, discoveries and artistic achievement emerge from their predecessors and feed into their successors. *Arcadia* is thus not restricted to its historical setting but describes the relationship between past and present as a continuous flow rather than the juxtaposition of opposites.

Although the two plays are separated by some 40 years (it was first performed at the Haymarket Theatre, London in March 1951 directed by Peter Brook), John Whiting's *A Penny For a Song* (hereafter *Penny*) is nevertheless useful for contextualising Stoppard's play, especially as a revised version of *Penny* was presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych in 1962, directed by Colin Graham. Later, British composer Richard Rodney Bennett adapted the play for an opera in two acts, which premiered in London in January 1967, the same year as Stoppard's *R&G* production in London. The John Whiting Award (from the Arts Council of Great Britain) in 1967 was given to Stoppard and Wole Soyinka. Whiting's play (using Carola Oman's book *Britain against Napoleon* as its main source) has a similar setting and feel to the

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play, and Billington said she'd got the idea from *Airpump* – which I'm quite sure she didn't. And even if she did, it wouldn't have been a conscious thing, and who cares anyway? I don't think anyone sits down and thinks I know, I'll write a play exactly like someone else's' (Personal communication with Martin White, November 2011). Interestingly, one review of Atkinson's play also cites *Arcadia*: 'Structured like Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*, but with none of its depth, *Abandonment* involves two sets of characters occupying the same space: a drawing room in a 19th-century house in Lower Manhattan, today and in 1885' (Stevens, *New York Times*, 19 April 2005).

world and characters of *Arcadia*. It is set in the garden of Sir Timothy Bellboys' house in Dorset, on a summer's day in the year 1804 and is a 'quintessentially English play: one that deals with a group of bungling Dorset aristocrats preparing to repel an expected Napoleonic invasion' (Billington, 2007: 52).

As part of their preparations and 'madcap schemes' (*Penny* 324)[50] for defeating the forthcoming French enemy, Timothy employs the servant, Humpage, as the look-out who spends the entire play perched in a tree with a telescope, watching 'for any sign of this threatened invasion' (*Penny* 323). Much laughter derives from the inept behaviours and interactions not only of the Bellboys brothers (Timothy and Lamprett) but also of the local Fencibles. Timothy's plan of 'engaging the French single-handed using but a single weapon' (*Penny* 330) is to assume an 'impersonation of Bonaparte' and to lead the French 'To confusion and ultimate damnation' by giving orders with an aid of his French phrase book (*Penny* 331), which causes confusion and panic among the amateur members of the local forces during their exercise of a mock battle, which was initially designed by their commander Selingcourt as 'a prank' of his own (*Penny* 338). Timothy's disguise is mistaken for an impersonation of Nelson by his brother Lamprett. His intention is also misunderstood as an attempt 'to escape the country' (*Penny* 355). Hester, Lamprett's domineering wife (echoed by Stoppard's Lady Croom in *Arcadia*) declares that she will join and command a platoon in the Amazon Corps in East Anglia ('It is being formed so that the women of England may exercise their natural power of command. I am to be a Sergeant-Major', *Penny* 343), and later appears dressed in a suit of golden armour.

Whiting's play is made up with English eccentric characters (as in *Arcadia*) engaging in new scientific developments such as hot-air ballooning, as Timothy descends down a well and later

[50] Quotations from *A Penny For a Song* are from *Whiting Plays: One*, published by Oberon Books in 1999.

returns in the gondola of a balloon which floats into the garden. Lamprett experiments with home-made fireworks and has a primitive fire-engine at the ready. Hallam Matthews, a house-guest from London, '*an exquisite, a dandy par excellence*' (*Penny* 312) also known as author of 'A Critical Enquiry into the Nature of Ecclesiastical Cant', 'With a Supplementary Dissertation on Lewd Lingo' (*Penny* 367), functions as a kind of observer accompanied by his suave valet (Samuel Breeze). Before becoming 'caught up in the general action' (*Penny* 382) of the modern warfare and local military activity in his host's house, Hallam appears to be more alarmed by the Romantic uprising in contemporary literature, when referring to William Wordsworth, 'I must attempt to know something of the forces that are conspiring the destruction of my kind' (*Penny* 322). Near the end of the play, Hallam's perspective becomes more philosophical: 'there is always a basis for understanding however remote it may appear, however dissimilar the two parties, however hopeless the situation' (*Penny* 382).

As in *Arcadia*, there is also much talk of love in the play. Unlike the main characters, whose reactions to impending war are based on their sheltered lives, a blinded soldier (Edward Sterne) who is guided by a little boy (Jonathan) intends to go to London and request King George III to stop the war, despite what he hears from Hallam about the King, 'he is not quite right in the head. At the moment we refer to his eccentricity. In a few years we shall call it something else' (*Penny* 360). Edward's relations with the daughter of the house are symptomatic of his relations with society.[51] A spirited, inquisitive seventeen-year-old Dorcas Bellboys, who reminds one of Stoppard's Thomasina Coverly in *Arcadia*, is the only character who behaves reasonably and it is she who briefly falls in love with the wounded soldier. 'Putting off childish ways' (*Penny* 343),

[51] According to Ronald Hayman: 'The main reason soldiering features so prominently in his [Whiting's] plays is that it raises questions of discipline and destruction, order and chaos' (Whiting, 1999: 17).

she has only just became aware of the happiness of love and the pain of parting, 'you do not cry over spilt milk or lost lovers' (*Penny* 387). It is also Dorcas who points to the absurdity of war: 'I wish to talk! I want to know – to understand – why men do such terrible things to each other. I want to know!' (*Penny* 334). The existence of the blinded soldier in the play makes it more imperative for us to scrutinize the destructive forces in human nature and the sadness of war and life. According to Ronald Hayman:

> In an English garden during the invasion scare of 1940, John Whiting was struck by the contrast between the peacefulness of his surroundings and the pandemonium of preparations being made in case German troops arrived on the coast [. . .] and though *A Penny for a Song* may look like an extravaganza, the behaviour of the characters is mostly based on factual accounts of English reactions to an earlier invasion scare. (Whiting, 1999: 303)

As Hayman suggests, 'Not only does Whiting distil a perfect English summer's day into stage action, he pokes gentle fun at our national blend of sportsmanship, pedantry, lunacy, pomposity and propriety' (Whiting, 1999: 304), much of which is shared by Stoppard in *Arcadia*. In a sense, the scenes of 1809/1812 in *Arcadia* reflect the early nineteenth century of post-Trafalgar times (Nelson's most famous but last battle at Cape Trafalgar in 1805 which saved Britain from the threat of invasion by Napoleon) and pre-Waterloo times (Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo in 1815). As one of the characters (Lady Croom) declares: 'The whole of Europe is in a Napoleonic fit [. . .] and the fashion for godless republicanism not yet arrived at its natural reversion' (*Arcadia* 41). In this way, Whiting and Stoppard might be seen to be continuing and renewing what Billington calls the English's 'strange fondness for upper-class plays set in summer gardens which end elegiacally with someone playing a musical instrument' (2007: 52).

Whiting's comedy ends jovially with talk about cricket,[52] celebrating a cheerful evening with a spinet striking up a tune from within the house. However, there remains a mingled feeling of joy and sorrow, yearning for the love that is lost, shared by Dorcas and Hallam sitting in the stillness of the garden: 'All my past life is mine no more; / The flying hours are gone, / Like transitory dreams given o'er, / Whose images are kept in store / By memory alone' (*Penny* 388).

In discussing the threads of ideas that surrounded Stoppard in his creation of the world of *Arcadia* by turning back to the artistic culture of the earlier period, Howard Brenton's *Bloody Poetry* (1984) and Bond's *The Fool* (1975) are other examples of eighteenth or nineteenth century reflections in which nineteenth-century poets are used as examples of artists who refused to compromise. In *Bloody Poetry*, commissioned by Foco Novo Theatre Company and first presented at the Haymarket Theatre, Leicester on 1 October 1984 and revived by the Royal Court Theatre in 1988, the action takes place between the summers of 1816 and 1822 in Switzerland, England and Italy, focusing on the relationship among the quartet of free and radical thinkers Percy Bysshe Shelley, Byron, Mary Shelley and Claire Clairemont, Byron's mistress. The play has an underlying Utopian theme in its celebration of Shelley as a committed artist and revolutionary hero, as Brenton suggests, 'for the quartet are determined to invent a new way of living, free of sexual repression. They make a terrible mess of it. Some found the "morality" of the play bewildering. I was not concerned with saying whether these people were "good" or "bad", I wanted to salute their Utopian aspiration for which, in different ways, they gave their lives. It is a celebration of a magnificent failure' (1989: xiv).

A decade earlier, in *The Fool*, in his portrayal of 'the robust and violent rural world of John Clare, the farm labourer turned poet, at the beginning of England's industrialization in 1815',

[52] Cricket is Stoppard's own great passion, and frequently features in his own plays.

Edward Bond had created 'a pageant of exploitation which demonstrates how imagination as well as manpower were victimized by the ruthless pursuit of profit' (John Lahr quoted in Roberts, 1985: 34). Subtitled as 'Scenes of Bread and Love' and first performed at the Royal Court Theatre on 18 November 1975, the play uses the career and madness of the peasant poet to demonstrate what Bond calls 'the victims of a vicious chaos we have created' (1987: 96). While criticizing social irrationality as the destructive source driving human beings insane, Bond's intention was to show that Clare's failure and estrangement from both land and literature is 'simply because the two necessary parts of action – understanding and whatever force is necessary to put that understanding into effect – are not joined' (Bond quoted in Roberts, 1985: 36).

Of further significance is *Arcadia*'s generic setting, as announced by its title. Stoppard's creative reuse of the pastoral places this work in a tradition of cultural and artistic expression of the classical notion of Arcadia. Hence, another example for contextualising Stoppard's play is Bond's later play, *Restoration* (1981), subtitled 'A Pastoral' and first presented at the Royal Court Theatre (on 21 July) directed by Bond himself. The title and subtitle of Bond's play are ironic comments on the stereotypically idyllic life led by rural residents. Bond draws attention to the shortcomings of this assumption, presenting a pastoral paradise threatened by human invasion and recalling the presence of Satan in the Garden of Eden.

The action of *Arcadia* and *Restoration* both take place in the pastoral settings of country houses in England, being representative of the class system which produced them. *Restoration*, apart from brief London locations and the prison house (Holme Cottage in Peterborough), is set in the country estate (The Hilgay) of Lord Are, similar to the country house setting (Sidley Park) of *Arcadia*. If, as John Bull suggests, Stoppard's setting 'operates here less as a symbol of the

changing state of the nation than as a hiding place from the larger political problems of that changing world, both exclusive in its intellectual pursuits, and excluding' (1994: 206), Bond uses this setting to raise questions relating to the possibility of human freedom and happiness in a society with an oppressive class hierarchy in which the increasingly exploitative and capitalistic rich rule the poor, misguided peasants.

Although Bond's dramaturgy, political stance and re-creative purpose are very different from Stoppard's, the way in which Bond uses a historical setting in his pastiche of Restoration comedy (by reworking characters and concepts of the Restoration comedy) offers insights into Stoppard's own use of particular historical moments within a pastoral frame. While Bond chose the Restoration period and Stoppard chose a slightly later period, it is interesting that both playwrights use definite historical moments but view them from very different perspectives and are attracted by crucially different features. Where Bond is inclined to analyse a political, class system using the conventions of the Restoration drama, Stoppard is more interested in scientific and artistic developments.

The eighteenth century England Bond chose for his play gave him the opportunity to create a parallel image of a capitalistic modern world of injustice in which the poor and innocent are exploited by the wealthy and ruling classes: 'the play points at us from the eighteenth century and also into the modern world. In doing this, it joins up with the songs' (Bond quoted in Roberts, 1985: 48–9). The typically light-hearted plot of the Restoration comedy, with its unprincipled rake and innocently gullible characters, becomes more polemic in Bond's hands, as he describes the ruthlessly unscrupulous rich who continue to exploit their poor, vulnerable and victimized servants.

In *Restoration*, an illiterate servant, Bob Hedges, is cajoled and tricked by his overbearing

aristocratic master Lord Are into covering up his master's crime and taking the blame for the bizarre murder of the unwanted wife (Lady Are) committed during breakfast. At the heart of *Restoration* is the perpetuation of the class divide. However, as Philip Roberts points out, 'Bond is cleverer than that. For a start, he makes Bob a stubbornly hypocritical peasant lad who willingly shops a fellow footman caught stealing the silver. [. . .] So, by a fine irony, Bob, the victim of injustice, is himself a boss's man' (1985: 47).

Bond's use of a historical framework in *Restoration* is one in which 'Characters and situation are largely fictional, but the style of the play mimics that of a play from an earlier period. The medium is more historical than the content in such plays' (Palmer, 1998: 9), and this is therefore less a history play than one written in the style of period drama. Both Stoppard and Bond use past events to provide a perspective on present-day society, though for Bond, the historical perspective provides the social context for his Marxist approach: 'we need to set our scenes in public places, where history is formed, classes clash and whole societies move. Otherwise we're not writing about the events that most affect us and shape our future' (quoted in Palmer, 1998: 4).

Coming from a different political viewpoint, Stoppard's approach to and intertextual use of history and social issues focuses more on personal, intellectual, artistic and scientific matters. His craft is more implicit, more literary and more in the vein of Whiting's perspective, in that as Hayman suggests, 'Whiting refused to interpret human experience in social, political and economic terms. He was primarily interested in what it means to be a man. To question this in a theatrical perspective, he had to explore in the empty spaces around the man-made problems and relationships' (Whiting, 1999: 17).

4.2 Overview

> We can't even predict the next drip from a dripping tap when it gets irregular. Each drip sets up the conditions for the next, the smallest variation blows prediction apart, and the weather is unpredictable the same way, will always be unpredictable.
>
> Valentine, *Arcadia*, 1993: 48[53]

In what has variously been called a 'perfect marriage of ideas and high comedy' (Nightingale, *Times*, 14 April 1993), 'part historical detective story, part examination of the wilder shores of chaos theory' (Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 8 September 1993) and 'an elaborate academic riddle' (Hickling, *Yorkshire Post*, 26 November 1993, p. 15), Stoppard examines the correlation between 'two sides of the human personality or temperament' (quoted in Gussow, 1995: 81) and other dualities prevalent in nature, life and art.

As with the other plays investigated in this thesis, *Arcadia* is a hypertext, but it is distinguished by the range and inter-disciplinary nature of its hypotexts (science, artistic and literary history, horticulture and philosophy), all of which provide commentaries on the different understandings of the nature of truth and are used as metaphors for human nature and behaviour. Literary hypotexts are also evident, as in the references to the off-stage figure of Lord Byron and his poetry,[54] which represents the transition from classicism to the Romantic Movement.

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[53] Further quotations from *Arcadia* (Faber and Faber, 1993) are parenthetically referenced by page number. Emphases and ellipses are in the original, unless otherwise stated.

[54] First referred to as a 'friend' (13) of Septimus's (by Lady Croom in Act 1), and later referred to as 'an eighteenth-century Rationalist touched by genius' (60) by a present-day academic in Act 2, Byron in 1809 was associated with his satire *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* 'aimed at [his] seniors and betters' (40). By 1812, when he returned to England from his European trip Byron had become well-known as 'the author of 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage', the most poetical and pathetic and bravest hero' (79).

Arcadia had its premiere at the Lyttelton Theatre (National Theatre) in London in 1993, directed by Trevor Nunn. Its first American production was in 1995 at the Lincoln Centre. Reviews of these productions, and of a major West End revival in 2009 in the Duke of York's theatre, directed by David Leveaux, commented on the juxtaposition of art and science in the play, along with other 'binary oppositions – classic versus romantic, Newtonian versus quantum physics, dispassionate inquiry versus the lust for fame' and the resulting 'farcical combat between the rival scholars' (Wardle, *Independent on Sunday*, 18 April 1993).

Moving across time, the play tracks the archaeological endeavours of two present-day literary critics – the garden historian Hannah Jarvis and the Sussex University lecturer and Byron investigator Bernard Nightingale – as they attempt to piece together or *determine* occurrences at Sidley Park, the large Derbyshire estate of Lord Croom, from 1809 to 1812. While employing a variety of historical and cultural references to the changes taking place in British landscape gardening and the Romantic Movement in English literature in the early nineteenth century, the play, set in the same room in Sidley Park in two time frames, also turns around the rational-classical versus imaginative-romantic dichotomy represented by parallel characters, and present in its discussion of science, love and the mysteries of the past. Further threads are provided (in the past time frame) by the mathematically-gifted yet doomed daughter of the Croom family (Thomasina Coverly), 'her Byronic tutor' (Hassell, *What's On*, 25 August 1993, p. 13) Septimus Hodge, and her opinionated mother (Lady Croom), in juxtaposition with the present-day residents (Valentine, Chloë and Gus). Referred to as a guest staying at Sidley Park in 1809, Byron is unseen, as is also Mrs Chater, who remains a crucial off-stage presence and a constant reference point in the play, her disruptive sexual attraction introducing chaos into the apparent orderly life of the country house.

Despite the 'heavy surface of scientific learning', Stoppard's own comments indicate that *Arcadia* is neither 'a play about science' nor 'a play for scientists' (Lawson, *Independent Magazine*, 10 April 1993, p. 24). The play was largely generated from Stoppard's 'extensive reading of scientific books' done 'for stimulation and pleasure': he views science as 'a large slice of our culture. There's nothing odd about the arts feeding off it, even though science plays about as small a part in the theatre as it does in the lives of most non-scientists' (quoted in Hawkes, *Times*, 13 April 1993, p. 29). From an artistic perspective, science offered Stoppard another means of making a commentary on life:

> But my interest is a peculiar kind. It's a writer's interest. I don't think one should make the mistake of thinking one is a frustrated scientist. One of the luxuries of being a writer of fiction – and perhaps especially a playwright – is that taking a superficial interest in deep subjects is perfectly respectable [. . .] One is purporting to entertain the public. (Lawson, *Independent Magazine*, 10 April 1993, p. 24)

Stoppard's use of scientific ideas gradually developed in his earlier plays, before being fully realised in *Arcadia*. *R&G* introduces scientific concepts as a means of emphasizing the incomprehensible world confronted by the two title characters and *Hapgood* 'equates the wave-particle theory of light with the double-dealing world of espionage', in which 'quantum mechanics provides a metaphor for the uncertainties of human personality' (Gussow, 1995: 77–8). In *Arcadia*, Stoppard appropriates scientific concepts such as chaos theory, fractals and sensitivity to initial conditions, to dramatize the difficulty of predicting the future and describing the past, while exploring the elusive nature of truth and time and the unpredictable nature of love.

Chaos theory is a scientific principle describing the unpredictability of complex systems

such as weather patterns, ecosystems and wildlife populations. Although apparently random, such chaotic systems have certain characteristics that can be described by mathematical algorithms. As Thomasina explains, 'if there is an equation for a curve like a bell, there must be an equation for one like a bluebell, and if a bluebell, why not a rose?' (37). Valentine Coverly, the character who clarifies the scientific concepts woven into the play, expands this idea:

> It's how you look at population changes in biology. Goldfish in a pond, say. This year there are x goldfish. Next year there'll be y goldfish. Some get born, some get eaten by herons, whatever. Nature manipulates the x and turns it into y. Then y goldfish is your starting population for the following year. Just like Thomasina. Your value for y becomes your next value for x. The question is: what is being done to x? What is the manipulation? Whatever it is, it can be written down as mathematics. It's called an algorithm. (45)

The implications of chaotic algorithms and fractal geometry for our lives are examined by Stoppard, as he questions what is being done to the past, to history, to time, to the universe and to life. The play demonstrates the oxymoron of 'disorderly order' or 'orderly disorder' in life, revealing the coexistence of chaos and order (deterministic chaos) not only in scientific discoveries but also in the history of aesthetics, English landscape gardening, literature and human temperament. As John Fleming suggests, 'Stoppard, in conjunction with collaborators, often employs a controlling metaphor that illuminates the central ideas. The metaphor and ideas are theatricalised not only by the dramatic structure but also by the stage images' (2001: 5). The controlling metaphor in *Arcadia* has been identified by Stoppard as 'a reconciliation between the idea of things not being random on the one hand and yet unpredictable on the other hand' (Fleming, 1993: 19).

Contrasting the (classic) science of two hundred years ago with contemporary theories,

Stoppard rejects the deterministic, Kantian view that science and applied reason can eventually uncover absolute truths (or indeed, that absolute truths exist), using chaos theory and relativity 'as an extended theatrical metaphor' (Shepherd-Barr, 2006: 6), and employing fractal structural patterns of self-similarity of form and content (reiterated algorithms); as the play progresses, the *y* value in one scene becomes the *x* value in the next, and further self-similar details are revealed, in the manner of a *mise-en-abyme* fractal, mirroring 'The Coverly set' invented by Thomasina to 'plot [the apple] leaf and deduce its equation' and to 'work outward from the middle of the maze' (37). As Valentine explains, 'Each picture is a detail of the previous one, blown up' (76).

This self-referring dramatic structure unfolds 'from the interaction of the unpredictable and the predetermined' (Melbourne, 1998: 557), mirroring and reinforcing the notion of deterministic chaos in nature and life that appear in the play's structure (in which chance and doubleness are carefully orchestrated) and content: 'My plays may have a fragmented look, but they're very traditional plays. Everything is logical and rational [. . .] I believe in craftsmanship. It's what crystallizes an art form' (Eichelbaum, *San Francisco Examiner*, 28 March 1977, p. 24).[55]

Arcadia continues Stoppard's preoccupation with dualities, prefigured in *R&G* through the

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[55] Among the differing perspectives on this point, some commentators see *Arcadia* as a very controlled and rational piece of work which does not reflect in its structure the theories it talks about in the text (see Simon Jones (1998) and his ideas on the application of chaos theory to drama). Hawkes describes *Arcadia* as 'Constructed as intricately as Aristotle's universe' (*Times*, 13 April 1993, p. 29). Others see *Arcadia* as the perfect play about science, in which the structure is a dramatic reflection of the subject. Martin White informs me that speaking on the topic 'Performing Science' at a symposium on Transmediality at the Drama Department of Bristol University, 6–8 January 2011, Michael Vanden Heuvel said of *Arcadia* that 'Stoppard weaves a very tight text' and that 'its form replicates the theme and content'. Paul Delaney also comments: '*Arcadia* played to sold-out houses and the NT bookstalls broke all records for sales of a playscript. In part audiences may have responded intellectually by "wanting to know" just what an iterated algorithm may be or, indeed how the play itself may be an iterated algorithm' (1994: 265). The existence of differing interpretations is in a sense what Stoppard pursues in his work: offering opportunities for different perceptions.

juxtaposition of 'antithetical ideas' (Billington, *Guardian*, 2 April 1993), with the resultant polyphony of dualities in art, nature and human life foregrounding similar dualities in human temperament. Correlations and affinities (rather than differences) between seemingly opposing concepts (reason/imagination, logic/emotion, geometry/nature, formality/spontaneity, and discretion/valour) are discovered as Stoppard challenges the binary 'either/or' classification of people or art in favour of the 'both/and' paradigm, or the harmony and interplay between variables. Seeing these concepts as points along a continuum, rather than exclusive 'either/or' alternatives, Stoppard aims for 'an idyllic vision of life' (Gussow, 1995: 112), which can be traced back to earlier plays such as *Where Are They Now?* (1973 radio play) and *The Real Thing*, and *Arcadia* continues the playwright's philosophical speculation on happiness as a state of being. Stoppard's use of the waltz at the end of the play's final scene therefore conjures up a crucial image, mirroring the polyphony of dualities that has been playing throughout, and symbolizing the coming together of the binaries at the mean point of the space-time continuum of the universe.

In addition to the interaction of binary concepts and the collision between art and science, further polyphonies of ideas can be seen, in Trevor Nunn's words, as 'the collision of two different worlds' as 'two sets of people living in different centuries change each other mightily in the course of the action' (Billington, *Guardian*, 2 April 1993). This collision raises questions as to how the past influences the present and how the present can affect the past. Alternation between the past and present in the play not only shows 'the passage of time' but also 'allows each age to serve as a paradigm for understanding the other' in that the transition from 'the classical Newtonian era of the Enlightenment and the following period of Romanticism, is intended to illuminate our own postmodern age and the rise of Chaos Theory' (McKinney, 2003: 399). This chapter attempts to find order underlying the apparently chaotic surface of *Arcadia*, viewing the

play as a palimpsest (both in text and in performance), and further explores the ways in which the plural hypertextualities and polyphonies magnify the play's multi-faceted, universal themes.

4.3 Playful *contamination* of hypotexts

Arcadia is important in terms of hypertextual analysis in its use of what is termed '*contamination*' in poetics, or 'the mixture in varying doses of two or more hypotexts' (Genette, 1997: 258). Genette points out that this is a traditional practice in theatrical history:

> Jean de Rotrou's *Antigone* mixes Sophocles' plot with Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, and Boito's libretto for *Falstaff* borrows from both *Henry IV* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. [. . .] Many a work thus comes into being thanks to the decisive spark struck by a felicitous encounter between two or more elements, borrowed from literature or from "life" [. . .] Those are contaminations between texts, or between texts and borrowings from "reality". (1997: 258–9)

Stoppard recalls that the 'felicitous encounter' of ideas in *Arcadia* was first inspired by accounts of deterministic chaos in James Gleick's *Chaos: The Making of a New Science* (1987):

> I thought that quantum mechanics and chaos mathematics suggested themselves as quite interesting and powerful metaphors for human behaviour, not just behaviour, but about the way, in the latter case, in which it suggested a determined life, a life ruled by determinism, and a life which is subject simply to random causes and effects. Those two ideas about life were not irreconcilable. Chaos mathematics is precisely to do with the unpredictability of determinism. (in Gussow, 1995: 84)

This dramatization of contemporary scientific discourse is a significant cultural practice,

with implications for contemporary life, since chaos theory and the associated complexity theory have been described as 'driving our world. Everything that is real is chaotic – space flight, electronic circuits, deserts, ecology of jungles, the stock market, national economies . . . the list is endless. And all living systems [. . .] are complex systems' (Sardar and Abrams, 2004: 87).

In addition to dramatic transposition of conceptual hypotexts, *contamination* in *Arcadia* includes a return to or borrowings from the literary past (including episodes from Byron's poetry and life), along with paratextual allusion to Nicolas Poussin's (1594–1665) painting *Et in Arcadia Ego*, and intertextual reference to Virgil, who first romanticized the idea of Arcadia in his *Eclogues*. A further element contributing to the melting pot of hypotexts in *Arcadia* is the frequent reference to the history of English landscape gardening (in its shift from the symmetrical to the apparently natural) as an emblem of deterministic chaos and as an exemplary case of palimpsest, as John Barrell writes on geometry and the garden in the programme notes for both London productions of *Arcadia*:

> The grounds of Sidley Park, the house which provides the setting for *Arcadia*, are a palimpsest on which all three of the main styles of eighteenth and early nineteenth century landscape garden have at one time or another been inscribed.

4.3.1 Dramatic transposition of scientific discourse

Arcadia is significant for its dramatic transposition of concepts from science and landscape gardening as hypotexts, the scientific discourse providing the intertextuality, rather than any literary text which describes them. Scientific hypotexts from Newtonian causal mechanics to entropy, chaos theory, fractals, iterated algorithms and the probabilities of quantum mechanics appear in the play and are skilfully interwoven into the overall fabric as metaphors for the human

condition, becoming integral tools of the playwright's craft. This section considers the impact of such *dramatization* of scientific discourse (or narrative), examining the various scientific hypotexts individually before showing how they merge and interact.

4.3.1.1 Newtonian mechanics

The physicist, mathematician, astronomer, natural philosopher, alchemist and theologian,[56] Isaac Newton (1643–1727) is referred to frequently in *Arcadia*, where his scientific discourse is representative of ordered, classical ideas. Newton's notions about universal gravitation and the three laws of motion dominated science for three centuries, and his view of the physical world provided a stable model for the establishment of harmony in the civic world. These ideas were revolutionary in his time and empowered the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century. However, his mechanistic view of reality ignored subjective human emotions and tendencies as factors in scientific enquiry and this is commented upon in *Arcadia* through word play, double entendres and misinterpretation of ideas. Valentine reminds the audience that Newton was the first to identify gravitational attractions between bodies, but then reinterprets the phrase in terms of human relationships, sex and love, referring to these as 'the attraction that Newton left out' (74). Thomasina also makes the 'action of bodies in heat' (84) refer to both Newton's law of motion and the unpredictable nature of love and sex, while Chloë blames Newton for failing to explain the random nature of physical/sexual attraction: 'he universe is deterministic all right, just like Newton said, I mean it's trying to be, but the only thing going wrong is people fancying people who aren't supposed to be in that part of the plan' (73).

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[56] Newton is significant in that he embodies physics, mathematics, astronomy, natural philosophy, alchemy and theology and is in a sense a living version of the play.

These human gravitational attractions play an important part in the play, both for the past time frame characters and the present-day characters, and it is significant that neither Newton nor God offer a means of managing them, as Lady Croom points out: 'It is a defect of God's humour that he directs our hearts everywhere but to those who have a right to them' (71). However, it is important to remember that Newton changed the world governed by an interventionist God into one in which God followed rational and universal principles, allowing people to pursue their lives rationally rather than trusting to superstition and mysticism. Therefore, when Septimus questions: 'If everything from the further planet to the smallest atom of our brain acts according to Newton's law of motion, what becomes of free will?' (5), he is voicing a stereotypical misunderstanding, since it was precisely the ability to have free will that Newton proposed. Whether people used it logically or *chose* to be irrational was up to them.

Bernard's attempt to re-construct Byron's history exhibits a similar misrepresentation of Newtonian ideas, employing a mechanistic approach on his human subject of research. According to Bernard's version of the isolationist method a few simple elements are identified, assembled together, and then analysed, allowing general conclusions can be made. When non-linear factors or variables appear, these are dismissed as unimportant 'noise', in contrast to chaos theory, in which this noise is seen as highly significant, as Valentine points out regarding grouse populations:

> Distortions. Interference. Real data is messy. [. . .] It's all very, very noisy out there. Very hard to spot the tune. Like a piano in the next room, it's playing your song, but unfortunately it's out of whack, some of the strings are missing, and the pianist is tone deaf and drunk – I mean, the *noise*! Impossible! (46)

Bernard's misinterpretation of his limited data is based on a causal, deterministic worldview, which necessitates the elimination of chaos-related concepts such as nonlinearity, indeterminism and uncertainty. The play reveals, however, that life is full of nonlinearity, self-similarity and sensitivity to initial conditions, as Valentine points out – 'your theory is incomplete' (59). Hannah also makes the important observation: 'You've left out everything which doesn't fit' (59).

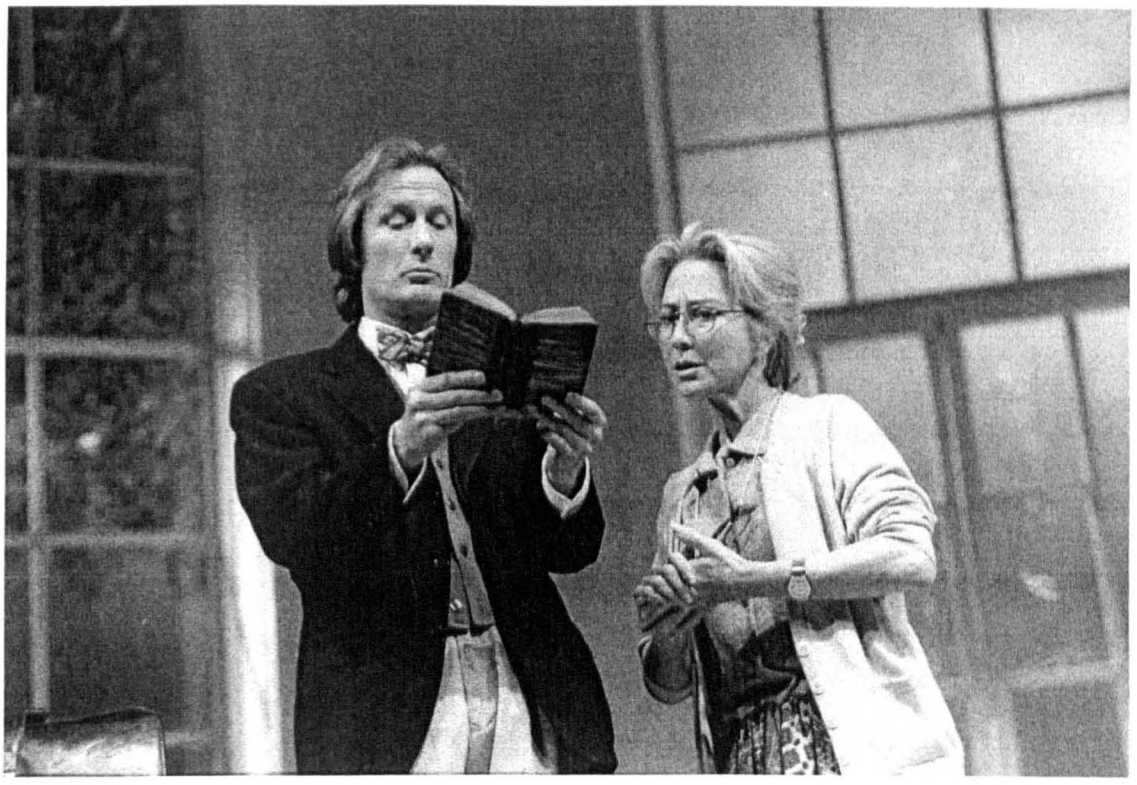

Figure 8. Arcadia (1993) Bernard Nightingale (Bill Nighy) and Hanah Jarvis (Felicity Kendal). Photographer Richard Mildenhall. (By permission of the National Theatre Archive.)

Bernard's simplistic analysis of the facts regarding Byron's stay at Sidley Park in 1809 relies upon three surviving letters. However, he is not aware of three other letters which would have disproved his theory, but which were burnt by Septimus. Highlighting the incompleteness of

historical truth, Septimus declares, 'Now there's a thing – a letter from Lord Byron never to be read by a living soul' (71) as he burns the first of these. The other two letters, found by Lady Croom in his room and described as, 'One envelope full of rice pudding, the other of the most insolent familiarities regarding several parts of my body' (69), which had been written by Septimus 'in the event of my death' (69), would also have provided critical evidence, had they survived. Bernard's stubborn refusal to admit the possible existence and significance of such unknown variables is not a criticism of Newton, who was aware of 'the slow growth of instabilities' (Newton, 1952) but rather a misapplication of deterministic, isolationist methods to subjective, qualitative human behaviour.

4.3.1.2 Entropy and the arrow of time

Entropy is another scientific concept which Stoppard uses in *Arcadia* to great effect, providing further commentary on the lives of his characters. Abruzzi and McGandy explain that:

> Entropy is a thermodynamic quantity whose value depends on the physical state or condition of a system. It is useful in physics as a means of expressing the Second Law of Thermodynamics. That is, [. . .] any changes occurring in a system that is thermally isolated from its surroundings are such that its entropy never decreases. This behaviour corresponds to the fact that entropy is a measure of the disorder of a system. On average all of nature proceeds to a greater state of disorder. Examples of irreversible progression to disorder are pervasive in the world and in everyday experience. Bread crumbs will never gather back into the loaf. Helium atoms that escape from a balloon never return. A drop of ink placed in a glass of water will uniformly colour the entire glass and never assemble into its original shape. (2003)

The concept of entropy is used in the play to demonstrate the irreversibility of the

'thermodynamic arrow of time' (and by extension, the actions of the characters) and the impossibility to trying to reconstruct the past (as in Bernard's research). As Thomasina observes, the '*entropy of mixing*' occurs when she stirs her rice pudding: 'But if you stir backward, the jam will not come together again. Indeed, the pudding does not notice and continues to turn pink just as before' (4–5). Septimus remarks in response:

> time must needs run backward, and since it will not, we must stir our way onward mixing as we go, disorder out of disorder into disorder until pink is complete, unchanging and unchangeable, and we are done with it for ever. This is known as free will or self-determination. (5)

The unpredictable death of his pupil, ironically a 'heat death' caused by a fire in her room, serves as proof of the irreversibility of time (Septimus cannot get her back) and that 'heat is gone from the earth' (65), as suggested earlier by Thomasina's heat-exchange diagram. Her light has disappeared from his universe and Septimus is in the darkness evoked in Byron's poem, 'Darkness' (first published in 1816), which Hannah quotes, and which describes the disappearance of the sun, leaving the cold earth behind:

> I had a dream which was not all a dream,
> The bright sun was extinguished, and the stars
> Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
> Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
> Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air . . . (79)

By quoting Byron's poem and suggesting that 'the key notion of physics that grips the imagination of poets is none other than entropy', Stoppard here attempts to bridge the gap

between the 'two cultures' of science and art (McKinney, 2003: 401). The theme of entropy is iterated in a similar pattern by Valentine and Hannah, evoking the fractal structure of the play, and is used by Valentine as a metaphor for the universe: 'Heat goes to cold. It's a one-way street. Your tea will end up at room temperature. What's happening to your tea is happening to everything everywhere. The sun and the stars. It'll take a while but we're all going to end up at room temperature' (78). Valentine later expands on this 'one-way-street' quality of entropy and considers the implications it offers for life:

> you can't run the film backwards. Heat was the first thing which didn't work that way. Not like Newton. A film of a pendulum, or a ball falling through the air – backwards, it looks the same [. . .] But with heat – friction – a ball breaking a window – [. . .] It won't work backwards [. . .] You can put back the bits of glass but you can't collect up the heat of the smash. It's gone. (93)

This concept of the '"arrow of time" that points toward the eventual "heat death" of the universe' (Fleming, 2001: 194) is taken up by Septimus when he realises the implications of Thomasina's 'diagram of heat exchange' essay: 'So the Improved Newtonian Universe must cease and grow cold. Dear me' (93). In contrast to Newton's vision of an ordered cosmos and of mechanical processes in which time is not a factor, entropy presents a picture of a universe proceeding irreversibly towards disorder. The final realization of this picture occurs towards the end of the play, when time is ironically reversed and mixed on the stage:

> VALENTINE: The heat goes into the mix.
>
> (*He gestures to indicate the air in the room, in the universe.*)
>
> THOMASINA: Yes, we must hurry if we are going to dance.
>
> VALENTINE: And everything is mixing the same way, all the time, irreversibly . . .

SEPTIMUS: Oh, we have time, I think.

VALENTINE: . . . till there's no time left. That's what time means.

SEPTIMUS: When we have found all the mysteries and lost all the meaning, we will be alone, on an empty shore.

THOMASINA: Then we will dance. Is this a waltz? (94)

By reversing time's arrow, Stoppard shows how time changes the nature and life of Sidley Park and (by extension) of our universe. At the same time, although it is running down toward an ending, as Paul Davies writes in the 1993 production programme of *Arcadia*, 'nature organises pockets of resistance where time's arrow is swung around to point in the direction of continuing creation', suggesting 'the end of time and after' or the timelessness of the universe.

4.3.1.3 Quantum mechanics: relativity and uncertainty

In the drama of existence we are ourselves both players and spectators. (Heisenberg, 1958: 57)

Just as Newton's ideas offer an eighteenth century view of reality, so quantum mechanics, building on Einstein's papers on Special Relativity (1905) and General Relativity (1915) provide a twentieth century perspective on the problems of science at the molecular level. Superseding the planetary model of the atom, quantum mechanics describes electrons as probabilities, which do not 'choose' a location until observed. In addition, Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle (1927) posits that it is impossible to know both the position and the velocity of an electron at the same time and that by implication, deterministic attempts to discover absolute knowledge and absolute truth (as expressed by Thomasina below) were bound to fail.

> If you could stop every atom in its position and direction, and if your mind could comprehend all the actions thus suspended, then if you were really, *really* good at algebra you could write the formula for all the future; and although nobody can be so clever as to do it, the formula must exist just as if one could. (5)

Quantum mechanics showed that even the equations of Newtonian mechanics can exhibit sensitive dependence on initial conditions, with almost imperceptible or immeasurable variations producing unpredictable results in the long term. These early twentieth century theories provided a description of physical reality that is more accurate than Newton's, though still without accounting for the human passions which are so important in *Arcadia*.

4.3.1.4 Chaos theory

> In an ocean of ashes, islands of order. Patterns making themselves out of nothing. (Valentine, 76)

Towards the end of the twentieth century, chaos theory and the related complexity theory proposed a radically different view of reality that included fractal geometry, self-similarity, sensitivity to initial conditions and self-organisation. These concepts extend earlier scientific discourse by being applicable to the natural world at every level (not just the sub-atomic level of quantum physics or the cosmic scale of relativity) and open up a new perspective on life. As Robert May notes in the production programmes:

> much complexity and apparent irregularity seen in nature, from the development and behaviour of individual creatures to the structure of ecosystems, derives from simple – but chaotic – rules. [. . .] all this adds up to one of the real revolutions in the way we think about the world. Knowing the simple rule or equation that governs a system is not always sufficient

> to predict its behaviour. [. . .] exceedingly complicated patterns or behaviour may derive not from exceedingly complex causes, but from the chaotic workings of some very simple algorithm. Ultimately, the mathematics of chaos offers new and deep insights into the structure of the world around us, and at the same time raises old questions about *why* abstract mathematics should be so unreasonably effective in describing this world. (1993; 2009)

Valentine, the scientifically-inclined character in the present-day time frame of *Arcadia,* sums up the essence of chaos theory and its implications:

> The unpredictable and the predetermined unfold together to make everything the way it is. It's how nature creates itself, on every scale, the snowflake and the snowstorm. It makes me so happy. To be at the beginning again, knowing almost nothing. [. . .] The ordinary-sized stuff which is our lives, the things people write poetry about – clouds – daffodils – waterfalls – and what happens in a cup of coffee when the cream goes in – these things are full of mystery. (47–8)

These ideas, which N. Katherine Hayles (1990) calls 'orderly disorder', are juxtaposed in the play with the Newtonian deterministic worldview. 'The real importance of chaos', as Sardar and Abrams state, 'is its capacity as a new tool for solving problems and a new way of thinking about nature, the physical world and ourselves' (2004: 171). In contrast to earlier paradigms, and significantly for the present-time characters, chaos theory offers insights into the immeasurable factors of life (such as love and emotions) that the play investigates throughout, and which earlier scientific discourse disregarded. Stoppard has constructed *Arcadia* around this scientific concept: the structure of the play not only embodies the spirit of deterministic chaos, but also, as he says, 'mimics the way an algorithm goes through bifurcations into chaos' (Fleming, 1993: 24). The nonlinear shuffling between time periods in the play suggests disorder, but hides a tightly ordered

dramatic structure in which '[a] new steady state develop[s], a self-similar though downscaled replication of the primary pattern: and within these replications, even further downscaled replications reoccur, again and again. There is order in chaos' (Demastes, 1994: 246).

There are seven scenes in *Arcadia*: three in the past, three in the present, and the chaotic seventh scene in which the periods mix. Within that final scene there are six sub-scenes: two of only the past, two of only the present, and two where the different periods share the stage. Thus, as with complex systems in the physical world, bifurcations take place, leading to chaos, while pockets of order simultaneously occur. In 1975, Benoit Mandelbrot termed these self-similar patterns 'fractals'. As Fleming notes, self-similarity 'implies recursion, pattern inside of pattern – a trait typical of Stoppard's dramaturgy' (2001: 195):

> The self-similarity of fractal construction is abundant in nature and abundant in both the text and in the original London and New York stagings of *Arcadia*. Self-similarity of dialogue, situations, characters, props, costumes, and musical accompaniment are all evident; indeed, it is the aspect of deterministic chaos that Stoppard and the production use most frequently. (Fleming, 2001: 195)

The concepts of feedback and iterated algorithms can be also applied to the dramatic structure of *Arcadia*: 'the play itself may be an iterated algorithm' (Delaney, 1994: 265). In each scene, new information gained from the previous scene feeds back into the equation, becoming new input, in the manner of an iterated algorithm. Each scene adds previously missing information, so that the audience can piece together the puzzles contained in the play.

The Butterfly Effect, or sensitivity to initial conditions, defined as one of chaos theory's key concepts and discovered by the MIT meteorologist Edward Lorenz during the early 1960s,

proposes that minor changes to small parts of a system can produce unpredictable results in the long term: a butterfly flapping its wings in Tokyo can impact on weather patterns in Chicago. Stoppard applies this concept to human nature through his depiction of Bernard's behaviour, whose dismissal of seemingly insignificant factors leads to the invalidation of his research.

Another aspect of chaos theory which appears in *Arcadia* is what Gleick (1987) identified as 'strange attractors'. Complex systems have the ability to fluctuate randomly and unpredictably within the context of the system itself, but the system's guiding principles (the attractors) allow these parts to cohere over time into definite and predictable forms. While the system never repeats itself, order emerges within limited boundaries. In this way, the play oscillates back and forth between past and present and between order and chaos, but continues to be attracted by its scientific and literary hypotexts, which pull the variables into a recognisable shape, as in the final scene of the play.

4.3.1.5 Linking past and present: Fermat's Last Theorem

Fermat's Last Theorem is used in *Arcadia* to provide a parallel between scientific discourses of the past and present. At the beginning of the play, during Thomasina's mathematics lesson, Septimus tells her that the French amateur mathematician, Pierre de Fermat (1601–1665), wrote 'in the margin his copy of *Arithmetica*' that 'he had discovered a wonderful proof of his theorem but the margin being too narrow for his purpose, did not have room to write it down' (6). Thomasina thought this 'was a joke to make you all mad' (6) and imitating Fermat, wrote in her maths primer:

> I, Thomasina Coverly, have found a truly wonderful method whereby all the forms of nature

> must give up their numerical secrets and draw themselves though number alone. This margin being too mean for my purpose, the reader must look elsewhere for the New Geometry of Irregular Forms discovered by Thomasina Coverly. (43)

Later, referring to her own note, she states that 'It was a joke' (92), yet the unpredictability of life and the irony of history transform it into a prediction of Septimus' fate: 'It will make me mad as you promised' (92). Just as Fermat's Last Theorem kept people busy for a hundred and fifty years, Thomasina's discovery in 1809 kept Septimus busy until his own death in 1834.

A further irony is that two months after *Arcadia* was staged in 1993, the solution for Fermat's Last Theorem was announced by Andrew Wiles, a professor at Princeton University, who was educated at Oxford and Cambridge Universities. After solving a flaw in the proof, it was finally completed the following year (September 1994), unexpectedly contributing to the ongoing scientific discourse in Stoppard's play, where Thomasina's discovery is rediscovered two hundred years later and explained by the modern-day mathematician and Oxford postgraduate, Valentine. Both cases illustrate Septimus' view of the progress of knowledge: 'Mathematical discoveries glimpsed and lost to view will have their time again' (38).

4.3.2 Generic reactivation of pastoral literature

Arcadia is notable for its various references (implicit and explicit) to pastoral literature and art. Genette suggests the term 'generic reactivation' for this hypertextuality and describes it as a type of mimetic hypertextuality which arises when 'at several centuries' distance, an author decides to revive a long forgotten or deserted genre' (1997: 210). Although Stoppard's authorial intent in this regard is allusive, a generic reactivation of pastoral thematic patterns is evident in *Arcadia.*

4.3.2.1 Arcadia and its use in pastoral literature and art

While many commentators have focused on the novelty value (in terms of the stage) of the scientific concepts in *Arcadia*, it soon becomes clear to the reader and the audience that (as in life) science is one of the ways in which the conundrum of existence can be approached. Literature presents another perspective, which science has often criticised as being too subjective and emotional. However, the failure of science to meet its Enlightenment goals of progress and social advancement, along with 'the moral failure of science as felt by scientists themselves' (Goodheart, 1976: 379), has given validity to philosophical, ethnographic and qualitative approaches, as Stoppard shows by mixing the two main hypotexts in this play.

Literary hypertextuality in *Arcadia* can be classified as 'generic reactivation', allowing the play to be approached as a modern-day pastoral drama, with Stoppard's characters equivalent to shepherds in an Arcadian land. This is made apparent first of all 'by means of a paratextual sign that has contractual force' (Genette, 1997: 8). Stoppard's title, which serves as a paratextual allusion to the generic model of pastoral literature, in addition to the play's direct references to Virgil and his Arcadia, alerts the audience/reader to probable hypertextual relationships.

According to Guy Lee, pastoral writing was invented around 275 BC by the Greek writer, Theocritus, whose pastoral *Idylls* range from early realism to dramatic irony, humour and pathos, and finally to 'nostalgic plangency' (Virgil, 1984: 14–26). The genre was taken up by Virgil, who 'learnt to be learned, allusive and *cantabile*' (Virgil, 1984: 15), terms equally applicable to Stoppard's *Arcadia*.[57] Where the *Eclogues* presents 'the Virgilian surprise of shepherds with

[57] I am taking the Italian musical term *cantabile* to describe a rhythmic and songlike flowing manner, particularly distinctive in Stoppard's rhythmic dialogues and seamless flowing structures.

bucolic Greek names uttering melodious Latin verses and sometimes alluding to contemporary Romans' (Virgil, 1984: 16), *Arcadia* offers a Stoppardian, double-layered surprise. On the one hand, nineteenth century characters with Latin names (Septimus, Thomasina, Augustus) utter melodious Shakespearean verse drama (*Antony and Cleopatra*) and allude to contemporary English authors (Wordsworth, authors of Gothic novels, and Byron). On the other hand, modern-day shepherds recite Byronic verses ('She Walks in Beauty', asserting the timelessness of art and 'Darkness', depicting the shadow of death in the universe) and allude to contemporary scientific discourse and its implications for human life.

Pastoral literature grew as a reaction to the hustle and bustle of urban life, with its corruption, insincerity and materialism. Instead, the rural life of shepherds was seen as pure and innocent, unsullied by 'civilised vices' and closer to the biblical paradise of the Garden of Eden, though the shadow of the exile from paradise was also implicit in a juxtaposition of the themes of love and death. As Lee points out, Theocritus takes the world of Greek myth and treats it naturalistically, whereas 'Virgil takes a subject from real life and treats it romantically, playing down the humour, stressing the pathos and the poetry' (Virgil, 1984: 17–8). Stoppard adopts these themes in *Arcadia*, as his metaphorical shepherds discuss love and death in relation to multiple subjects (science, history, literature, art and real life), producing a high comedy of ideas, stressing dramatic irony and paradox, and reactivating the pastoral genre of his predecessors.

The pastoral world depicted in Virgil's *Eclogues* is partly set in 'a countryside at peace, offering the reader a refreshing change from the life of the city', while mirroring 'the disturbances of his real world, the Waste Land of the dying Roman Republic'. Virgil's Arcadia is therefore to be understood 'metaphorically, as an imaginary world far removed from the trials

and accidents of real life' (Virgil, 1984: 20).[58] Stoppard's Sidley Park, located in the Derbyshire countryside, offers a similar haven of peace (in 1809 and 1812), far from the Napoleonic wars waging on the continent. While taking up the themes of Greek pastoral poetry and reviving the genre, the allusive title of Stoppard's *Arcadia* goes beyond the dictionary definition of an 'idealised rural region' or 'scene of simple pleasure and quiet' (Hassell, *What's On*, 25 August 1993, p. 13) and suggests artistic references to Arcadian motifs such as Poussin's *Et in Arcadia Ego*, also known as 'The Arcadian Shepherds' (*Les bergers d'Arcadie*).[59] Poussin's paintings of four Arcadian shepherds (three male and one female) emerge as one of the play's key images (Figure 9). As the original National Theatre production programme points out:

> Poussin's *Et in Arcadia Ego* (1629–30) shows shepherds discovering a tomb, with an inscription whose meaning is controversial. It could be read as "I, who am now dead, also lived once in Arcadia", or from Death itself, "I, Death, exist even in Arcadia". (1993)

Ambiguity and subjectivity of perceptions are parodied by Stoppard when, in 1809, Lady Croom refers to Poussin, 'in short, it is nature as God intended, and I can say with the painter, "*Et in Arcadia ego*!" "Here I am in Arcadia"' (12). Septimus also provides his own interpretation, referring to Lord Croom's game book, 'A calendar of slaughter. "Even in Arcadia, there am I"', to which Thomasina replies, 'Oh, phooey to Death!' (13). Stoppard's characters offer an ironic contrast between the two possible interpretations of the phrase, showing that even in paradise

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[58] References to the notion of Arcadia range from early modern works such as Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (1593) and Ben Jonson's unfinished play *The Sad Shepherd* (ca. 1637), to Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), in which *Et in Arcadia ego* is the title of Book One.

[59] Poussin painted two versions of this painting, in 1629–1630 and 1637–1638. The first version of the painting (now in Chatsworth House, which is mentioned in *Arcadia*) is more Baroque than the later version.

(the Arcadian Sidley Park) death is present. The reality is that all things are destined to pass.

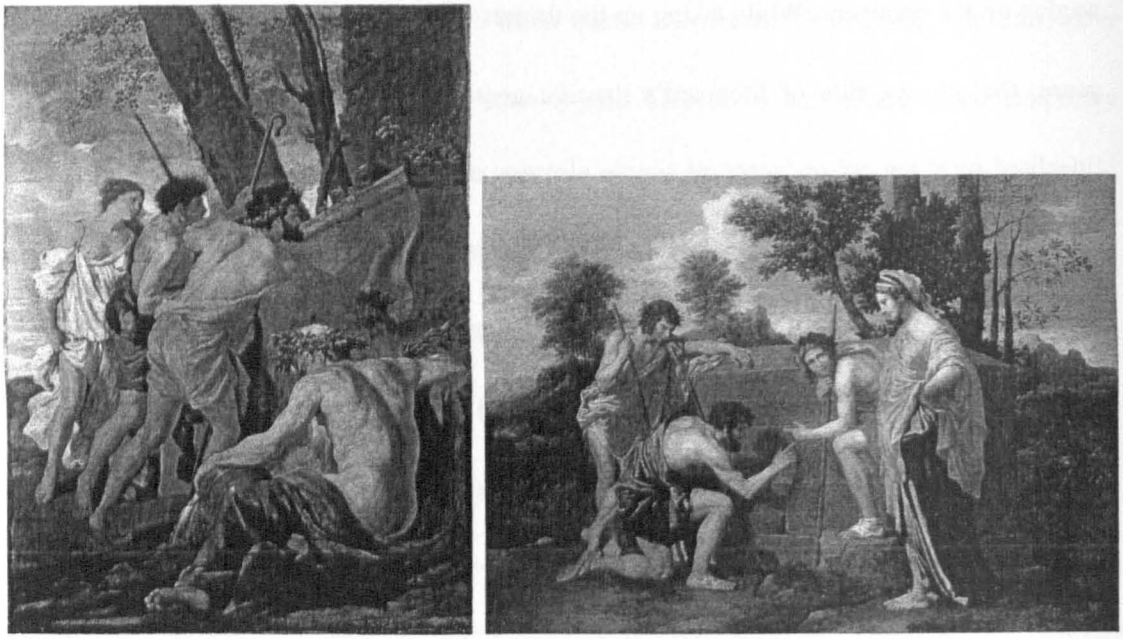

Figure 9. Left. *Et in Arcadia Ego*, Poussin (1629–1630), Chatsworth House, England; right. (1637–1638), Musée du Louvre, Paris

In addition to its other hypertextual *contaminations*, Stoppard's *Arcadia* can be seen as a dramatic re-enactment of Poussin's painting. The four quizzical shepherds in the painting (Figure 9) are transformed in the play, becoming Hannah (the more contemplative), Bernard, Valentine, and Gus (standing contemplatively on the left in the later painting), speculating on possible explanations for occurrences in Sidley Park, back in 1809 and 1812. They even make paratextual references at times, as when Hannah describes the palimpsestuous nature of English landscape gardening, 'Here look – Capability Brown doing Claude, who was doing Virgil. Arcadia!' (25), or when a newspaper headline for Bernard's 'discovery' reads: 'Even in Arcadia – Sex, Literature and Death at Sidley Park' (73).

In conclusion, Stoppard offers a generic reactivation of pastoral literature as one of the many

hypertextual threads in *Arcadia*, juxtaposing the practical world of 'realistic' science with the idyllic world of this form of literature, and showing that neither of them can account for the vagaries of human passions or for the fact that, whichever approach one takes to the mysteries of human existence, death (the end of that existence) is always present.

4.3.2.2 Byron and other literary allusions

Byron found himself famous one morning, after writing *Childe Harold*, and in similar manner, Stoppard woke up one morning 'to find himself famous with the National Theatre production of *R&G*' (Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 8 September 1993).[60] The never-seen Byron, as Alastair Macaulay suggests, functions in much the same way as the occasionally-glimpsed Hamlet in *R&G* (*Financial Times*, 18 December 1995); providing a shadow of death that looks forward to Stoppard's later plays – *Indian Ink*, *The Invention of Love*, and *The Coast of Utopia* trilogy. In *Arcadia*, Stoppard 'focuses on a particular moment at which a faith in Enlightenment – the predictability of everything by rational method – was challenged and began to crumble; and on a particular historical figure in whom many of these oppositions seem to come together' (Hunter, 2000: 158). References to Byron's contemporaries, the so-called Lake Poets of the Romantic Movement at the turn of the nineteenth century (Southey (7), Coleridge (25) and Wordsworth (41)) also appear in the play, along with references to the European wars and politics – 'The whole of Europe is in a Napoleonic fit' (Lady Croom, 41). These all contribute to the play's historical and artistic background, which takes place offstage.

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[60] Among the many reports on this topic, Jasper Rees writes that 'When asked, after its first night in New York, what *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is about he replied: "It's about to make me rich"' (*Independent Weekend*, 2 December 1995, p. 3) – a typically Stoppardian use of wordplay.

Stoppard's borrowings from Shakespeare and allusions to Wilde also continue in *Arcadia.* Thomasina's opinionated mother, Lady Croom, resembles Wilde's Lady Bracknell in her use of epigrams: 'Do not dabble in paradox, Edward, it puts you in danger of fortuitous wit' or 'ignorance should be like an empty vessel waiting to be filled at the well of truth' (11), and her question: 'Pray, what is this rustic hovel that presumes to suppose itself on my gazebo?' (12), is reminiscent of Lady Bracknell's: 'who is that young person whose hand my nephew Algernon is now holding in what seems to me a peculiarly unnecessary manner?' (347).

Quotations from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (39) illustrate the play's theme of personal and political catastrophe caused by sexual attraction, along with further literary allusions to D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love.* References to the Gothic novels, *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe (13), which influenced the new picturesque style garden of Sidley Park, suggest the intertextual relationship between nature, art, and life. Finally, the seamless mixing of the factual and the fictitious to create a plausible atmosphere (one of Stoppard's trademarks) also appears in *Arcadia,* with references to Milton, the 'author of *Paradise Lost,* which tells the story of the Fall' (7), whose *Lycidas* (1637) is the most famous English example of 'pastoral elegy', as well as to Walter Scott, the 'Scottish novelist who wrote reviews for the *Edinburgh Review*' (9).

4.3.3 Interweaving hypotexts

As described in the preceding sections, Stoppard presents a wealth of hypotexts in *Arcadia,* which he refers to through dramatic transposition, generic reactivation, and the more usual forms of hypertextual allusion. These hypotexts function, as in Stoppard's other plays, as a means of examining motives and moral bases underlying human acts and their consequences, building on

and reinterpreting insights from other professional discourses and from earlier literature. These threads are skilfully interwoven in the play, appearing and reappearing individually or in conjunction, sometimes contradicting each other and sometimes in harmony, producing a final carpet of differing perspectives on a number of issues: reality, the possibility (or impossibility) of an Arcadian existence, free will, and the interpretation of the past.

Although Newton's ideas prepared the ground for a deterministic interpretation of reality, Newton himself did not subscribe to the view that eventually man would be able to understand everything through the application of reason. It is interesting that the originator of the modernist revolution in science also sowed the seeds of doubt in determinism which grew into deterministic chaos. Rather than presenting us with 'either determinism or chaos theory', Stoppard works them into the play on a 'both/and' basis, as different approaches to the phenomena of reality. Relativity, quantum mechanics, fractals and chaos theory are useful to Stoppard in this sense, since they offer metaphors for the investigation of the emotions and love. These contemporary fields of science suggest that human emotions fall outside of the usual 'rational' quantitative tools of measurement and must therefore be approached with more up-to-date methods. The quantitative approach is parodied from the very first words of the play, when the brilliant Thomasina asks her tutor about 'carnal embrace' – an aspect of life which her studies have not covered. Septimus, who 'studied mathematics and natural philosophy at Cambridge' (24), hides behind an *objective* definition, which he uses as a means of *not* revealing the true nature of the concept:

> SEPTIMUS: Carnal embrace is the practice of throwing one's arms around a side of beef.
>
> THOMASINA: Is that all?
>
> SEPTIMUS: No . . . a shoulder of mutton, a haunch of venison well hugged, an embrace of grouse . . . *caro, carnis*; feminine; flesh. (1)

Stoppard is highlighting here the shortcomings of any description of life which ignores the affective and emotional aspects. 'It is no coincidence', as Ronald McKinney notes, 'that in this opening scene, Stoppard links Thomasina's quest for the proof of Fermat's last theorem and the understanding of the meaning of "carnal embrace". For both quests will be pursued in analogous ways throughout each century and period in human history' (2003: 402).

4.4 Polyphony of dualities

> None of us is tidy; none of us is classifiable. Even the facility to perceive and define two ideas such as the classical and romantic in opposition to each other indicates that one shares a little bit of each. (Stoppard quoted in Nathan, *Sunday Telegraph*, 28 March 1993, p. XIII)

In addition to the interweaving of scientific and literary hypotexts, *Arcadia* is significant for its presentation, exploration and interaction of apparently opposing concepts:

> At the same time, I was thinking about Romanticism and Classicism as opposites in style, taste, temperament, art. I remember talking to a friend of mine, looking at his bookshelves, saying there's a play, isn't there, about the way that retrospectively one looks at poetry, painting, gardening, and so on. Particularly when one starts dividing people up into classical temperaments and romantic temperaments – and I suppose it's not that far from *Hapgood* in a way. The romantic temperament has a classical person wildly signalling, and vice versa. (in Gussow, 1995: 90)

Arcadia demonstrates a polyphony of ambiguities and indeterminacies, eliciting harmony from the interdependence and coexistence of dualities, or to use Genette's words, 'the dramatic

plurality of voices', rather than 'a univocal narrative that is usually focused by a dominant viewpoint' (1997: 248). The play deals with and contrasts ideas and relationships from the Enlightenment view of nature, science, art and human temperament (mirrored in the geometrical, 'natural' style of landscape gardening of Capability Brown, the deterministic Newtonian worldview, and the emphasis on reason and rational thinking) and the Romantic view (mirrored in the picturesque style of gardening, poets of the Romantic Movement and Gothic novelists). Richard Corballis refers to this as the juxtaposition of mystery and clockwork:

> There is always a collision between two worlds: a world of 'mystery' and uncertainty, which is the real world, and a world of 'clockwork', abstraction and artifice, which is an unreal dream world – a world, Stoppard insists, to be avoided [. . .] in all Stoppard's work an abstract, artificial view of the world ('A') is pitted against the flux of reality ('B'), and the audience is invited to eschew the 'clockwork' of the former in favour of the 'mystery' of the latter. (1984: 11, 15)

Various topics (landscape gardening, Byron, love, art, science and research methods) serve in *Arcadia* as mediums for the expression and interplay of differing world views. These appear and reappear, voiced by different characters in different time frames, presenting a wealth of dualisms which form the basis of the play. The topic of landscape gardening is used by Hannah, for example, to express her view of the 'picturesque style' as symbolic of '[t]he whole Romantic sham' or the 'decline from thinking to feeling', while referring to Capability Brown's 'natural style' as one designed 'so that the fools could pretend they were living in God's countryside' (25). Hannah's notion of an Arcadia is 'Sidley Park in 1730', or 'Paradise in the age of reason' (27). This is similar (in a different time frame) to Lady Croom's opinion of the beauty of her classical garden – 'the familiar pastoral refinement of an Englishman's garden' (12) and her dissatisfaction

with the new picturesque style, in which 'Irregularity is one of the chiefest principles' (12).

As the production programmes of the 1993 National Theatre production and the 2009 revival both point out, the gardens in Sidley Park in 1809 are going through a transition from classic (reason, order, formality) to romantic (imagination, planned chaos, irregularity) during the play, and in themselves offer contrasting world views, contributing (offstage) to the polyphony of voices and mirroring the conflicts of perspective in the play. As John Lahr states, the 'wildness of picturesque style is an attempt to contain chaos by building the unpredictable into the landscape, just as Thomasina, in her algebraic equation, is unwittingly introducing chaos into the physical laws of life' (1996: 238). Enoch Brater further suggests that 'what takes place in the foreground of this play's scenic action is everywhere supported by the heavy historical drama taking place in the background, right outside the stately windows of Sidley Park' (2001: 209–10). Stoppard sets the play 'at the very disruptive moment when the classical sensibility is about to be overwhelmed by the romantic' (Brater, 2001: 210), thus allowing the full gamut of conflicting ideas and dualities to emerge. However, it may be observed that classic and romantic styles are, where gardens are concerned, equally contrived impositions on the 'natural' landscape.

The polyphony of dualities in *Arcadia* emerges from arguments and exchanges between characters, as when contrasting views on scientific method are voiced by rival polemics between Bernard and Valentine. This type of disagreement is not new, as Stoppard explains:

> In any age, including the period around the year 1800, we had a kind of reaction against scientism by the poets of the time, so you find that Blake and Wordsworth and Coleridge as young men are resisting the thinking of that time that science was rapidly finding out all the answers, and would solve all the mysteries. The sense, or illusion, that science is doing exactly that seems to accompany every age, and creates an opposing force. (Hawkes, *Times*, 13 April 1993, p. 29)

The play continues to juxtapose anti-scientific polemic, as voiced by Bernard, with Valentine's scientism. Bernard sees timeless, universal truths in art and poetry, as opposed to science, 'A great poet is always timely. A great philosopher is an urgent need' (61), and goes on:

> If knowledge isn't self-knowledge it isn't doing much. Is the universe expanding? Is it contracting? Is it standing on one leg and singing 'When Father Painted the Parlour'? Leave me out. I can expand my universe without you. 'She walks in beauty, like the night of cloudless climes and starry skies, and all that's best of dark and bright meet in her aspect and her eyes'. There you are, he wrote it after coming home from a party. (61)

Arcadia also demonstrates a polyphony of worldviews taken from the history of cosmology, the Aristotelian cosmos (Bernard), the Newtonian deterministic universe (Septimus), and deterministic chaos (Valentine, foretold by Thomasina), which serves to reveal different modes of understanding and perceiving reality. These worldviews are reflected in the way in which the characters react to Aristotelian, Newtonian, and chaos modes of representing the world. Bernard's view of reality favours an orderly Aristotelian cosmos, designed by a Great Designer:

> There's no rush for Isaac Newton. We were quite happy with Aristotle's cosmos. Personally, I preferred it. Fifty-five crystal spheres geared to God's crankshaft is my idea of a satisfying universe. I can't think of anything more trivial than the speed of light. (61)

Aristotle's totally ordered view of reality explained the facts as they were observed at his time. However, with the development of the telescope, his model was found to be lacking. In similar manner, Bernard tries to reconstruct facts according to his evidence, but refuses to accept

that other factors might be involved and that other, contradictory evidence might be found. This is a crucial error, as Hannah indicates, 'Superb. But inconclusive' (31), but Bernard denies what cannot be proven: 'Proof? *Proof*? You'd have to be there' (49) or 'I don't know, I wasn't there, was I?' (57). His universe expands, only to collapse into a metaphorical 'Big Crunch', the opposite of the Big Bang. Ironically, he criticises cosmology scientists with his reference to Stephen Hawking, 'I'd push the lot of you over a cliff myself. Except the one in the wheelchair, I think I'd lose the sympathy vote before people had time to think it through' (61), yet he is also trying to find a 'Theory of Everything' or in Hawking's own words 'a single theory that describes the whole Universe' (Pirani and Roche, 1999: 162). In contrast, Valentine reflects a relativist, 'chaotic' view of a world controlled by immeasurable divergences in initial conditions and described by fractal geometry. From this perspective, classic, deterministic science has failed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the world – including human emotions – and must therefore make room for other modes of understanding.

The juxtaposition between classicism and romanticism, along with the interdependence between the two, is embodied in the characters. Hannah's rational enquiry and Bernard's spontaneous imagination illustrate dualities of human temperament: logic or discretion vs. emotion or valour. Rationalist and romantic are then juxtaposed with the silent voice of genius in Gus, whose mysterious capacity provides a critical clue to Hannah's investigation of the Sidley Hermit – Thomasina's drawing of 'Septimus holding Plautus' (97) – at the closing moment of the play. These dualities come together in a state of dynamic equilibrium in the last scene, when the two periods overlap and there is a harmonious waltz between Thomasina and Septimus, and between Gus and Hannah. This dance symbolises the union of seeming opposites, visually presenting the harmony emerging from the polyphony in the play, and suggesting the binaries

coming together in the middle of the continuum, achieving what Stoppard calls 'equilibrium' of happiness. In this waltz 'all the major dichotomies [. . .] have interpenetrated each other, showing that their coexistence and interdependency of these seeming opposites is fundamental to the way the world, life, and humans operate' (Fleming, 2001: 206). As Lahr observes:

> Together, the couples whirl around the old table covered with the inventory of centuries of learning. [. . .] The dance becomes the dance of time: one awkward, one graceful; one in celebration, one in resignation. The waltz, an act of grace in the face of gloom, is a perfect embodiment of Stoppard's spiritual standoff. Playwriting, like the dancing, is a way of giving off heat in a cooling universe: an assertion and an abdication at the same time. (1996: 240)

In performance, the mise-en-scène of *Arcadia* also creates a polyphony of dualities. Scenes of both periods take place on the same April morning in Sidley Park, creating a polyphonic stage, as Stoppard notes in his stage directions for Scene Two (the first present-day scene):

> *Both periods must share the state of the room, without the additions and subtractions which would normally be expected. The general appearance of the room should offend neither period. In the case of props – books, paper, flowers, etc., there is no absolute need to remove the evidence of one period to make way for another. However, books, etc., used in both periods should exist in both old and new versions. The landscape outside, we are told, has undergone changes. Again, what we see should neither change nor contradict. On the above principle, the ink and pens etc., of the first scene can remain.* [. . .] *During the course of the play the table collects this and that, and where an object from one scene would be an anachronism in another (say a coffee mug) it is simply deemed to have become invisible. By the end of the play the table has collected an inventory of objects.* (15)

Continuity of time and history is achieved by the use of stage props (books, pencils, etc.), which accumulate as the play develops, up to the last moment when the two periods intermingle.

The two spatiotemporal worlds are also linked by an apple and a pet tortoise. The apple has long been iconic in western society, representing biblical 'forbidden fruit', consumption of which caused Adam and Eve to be exiled from the Garden of Eden (the original *Arcadia*). This association is evoked a number of times in the play, reinforcing the theme of sexual attachment and resultant disaster. The gender roles are reversed, however, when Gus '*in his customary silent awkwardness*' (33) offers Hannah an apple he has just picked from the garden of the Sidley Park (34), 'as Eve holds out to Adam the Apple of Knowledge' (Lahr, 1996: 236). In the following scene, the same apple is picked up, during a Latin lesson, first by Septimus, who eats a slice of it and '*cuts another slice which he offers to Plautus*' (35), and then by Thomasina, who picks up the apple leaf and begins to 'plot this leaf and deduce its equation' (37).

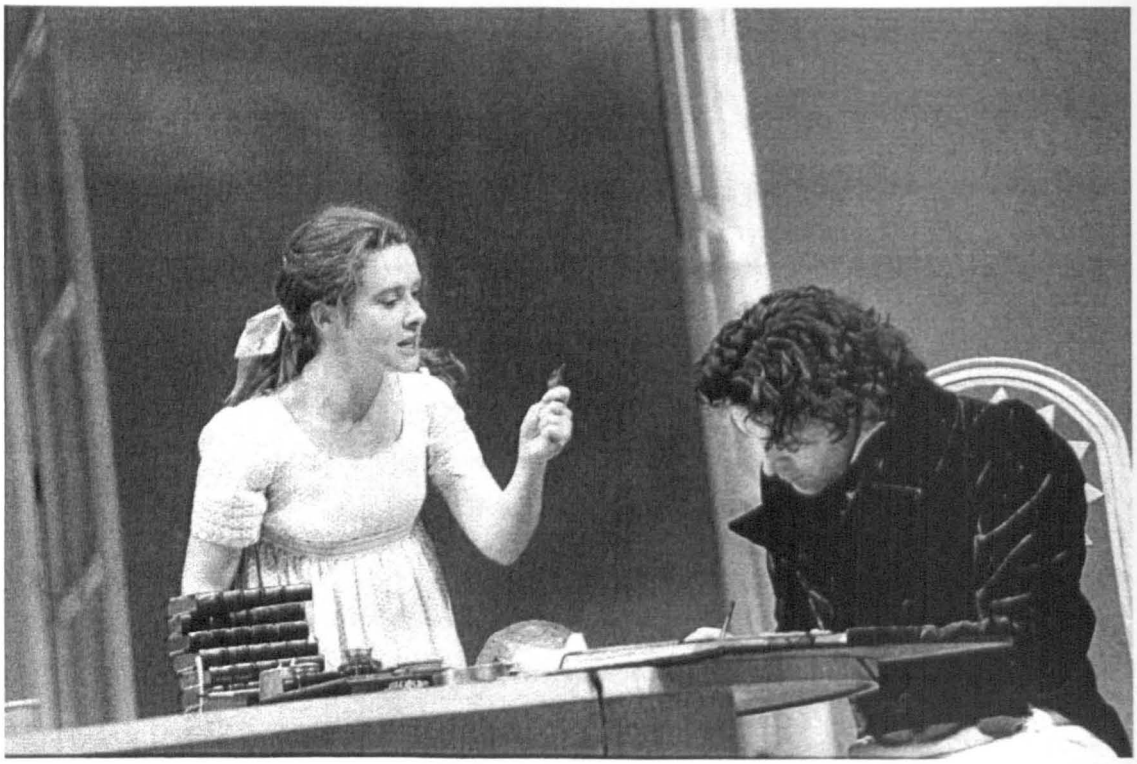

Figure 10. Arcadia (1993) Emma Fielding as Thomasina Coverley and Rufus Sewell as Septimus Hodge (photographer John Haynes). (By permission of the National Theatre Archive.)

As with other discoveries by Thomasina, this algorithm, which Valentine later realises on the laptop (which in the 2009 revival is an Apple laptop), is the precursor of later scientific development (in this case, fractals) and links to the scientific hypotext of the play. The tortoise also appears and reappears in both time frames, being called 'Plautus' by Septimus (referring to the Roman comic playwright of the same name and rhyming with tortoise) and 'Lightning' (18) by Valentine.

Offstage gunshots in the garden also link the two time frames. Stage directions indicate '*The distant popping of guns*' (13) when Lord Croom, Augustus and Byron shoot pigeons in 1809 and '*the distant pop-pop of a shotgun*' (17) in present-day Sidley Park. The annual Regency costume party hosted by descendants of the Coverlys, 'a dance for the district, our annual dressing up and general drunkenness' (Chloë, 17), also merges the two time frames.

4.5 Implications

> We shed as we pick up, like travellers who must carry everything in their arms, and what we let fall will be picked up by those behind. (Septimus, 38)

Stoppard is 'a playwright who sees culture as a seamless web, is interested enough to understand the part science plays in that culture, and brave enough to write a play around it' (Hawkes, *Times*, 13 April 1993, p. 29). Rather than trying to write *about* science in this play, Stoppard uses scientific concepts to investigate the postmodern human condition of uncertainty. To quote Septimus: 'This is not science. This is story-telling' (93). Chaos theory serves for

Stoppard 'as a metaphor for a play about the antithesis between the Romantic and the Classical' (Hawkes, *Times*, 13 April 1993, p. 29). As Fleming suggests, 'Stoppard accents those aspects of deterministic chaos that show there is underlying order to seemingly random events' (2001: 194), so that the continuous structural and thematic branching (bifurcation) of the play finally reaches a point of order. As Susanne Vees-Gulani notes, 'Stoppard actually explains the play's structure through its own content. At the same time, the structural organization reflects back on the content itself, revealing how it forms a self-similar structure' (1999: 423).

On another level, the play serves as a satire on the misuse of research and the unreliability of historical writing. Stoppard's use of chaos theory as a metaphor for the difficulties faced by those involved in biographical and literary research suggests that unsubstantiated assumptions can result in the reconstruction of the subject, rather than in its recovery. Bernard, a forerunner of Pike in *Indian Ink*, makes quantum leaps of supposition, parodying over-eager academics who are extrinsically motivated to publish and get points and by doing so to boost their ego. As Lahr points out, Stoppard is 'teasing the literary second-guessing that too often passes for biography' and Bernard's paper read in the opening of Act 2 is 'proof positive of the cynic's adage that "history is something that never happened written by someone who was never there"' (1996: 238, 239). Since the play shows both past and present in one room, alternating the two time periods, the audience witness the events of 1809 which, along with written documents which appear in the present scenes, give each individual member of the audience the opportunity to synthesize all the information, in contrast to Bernard's incomplete data. Dramatic irony is at work in the play, as the audience watches Bernard's misinterpretations and appreciate the absurdity of his research findings.

The play as 'drama of time and place', as Brater notes, 'is once more invigorated by a

liberating use of a shared literary past' (2001: 211). In terms of polyphony, Stoppard's suggestion of interdependence between seeming opposites evokes Eastern philosophies regarding the 'connectedness' of all things, including past and present. Furthermore, (mirroring the Yin/Yang dichotomy of Taoism) the 'opposites' cannot exist without each other (as with the two sides of the same coin in *R&G*); we cannot have white without black, since they belong to the same colour spectrum. In the case of the two styles of landscape gardens compared in *Arcadia*, we cannot have romanticism without classicism; they are mutually interdependent rather than opposites. Their co-existence points to the interconnected, interdependent and intertextual nature of life.

4.6 Conclusion: *Et in Arcadia Ego!*

> The future is disorder. A door like this has cracked open five or six times since we got up on our hind legs. It's the best possible time to be alive, when almost everything you thought you knew is wrong. (Valentine, 48)

Despite the probabilities of chaos and quantum physics (and by extension, the chance elements of life and love), Stoppard believes in a moral base for human behaviour, as can be seen in the later chapter on *The Coast of Utopia* trilogy. He therefore presents opposite extremes of the various dualistic spectra in *Arcadia*, in order to resolve these into his both/and paradigm of 'The middle way' (a concept from Buddhism). Although *Arcadia* is not a 'Science play' (see p. 115), scientific enquiry is used as a metaphor for this process, with opposite ends of the deterministic/chaotic spectrum gradually resolving in deterministic chaos. Classicism and Romanticism also come together in the final waltz, having been at odds during the play.

The history of cosmology tells us that modes of understanding reality and the universe are constantly changing. The Aristotelian cosmos of total order was displaced by the Newtonian universe, which then gave way to relativity and quantum physics, which have in turn been updated by deterministic chaos and complexity theory. *Arcadia* is 'Stoppard's tribute to the complexity, unpredictability and inscrutability of the world – pet themes since *R&G*' (Nightingale, *Times*, 14 April 1993) and 'constantly engages the imaginary in a dialogue with the historically true' (Barton, *New York Review of Books*, 8 June 1995). Despite the fact (according to Thermodynamics) that the future holds only disorder and the world (and we) are 'still doomed', the play leaves the audience on an optimistic note, as Valentine suggests, 'if this is how it started, perhaps it's how the next one will come' (78). The situation might also suggest an opportunity for a successor theory in the future, as in Septimus' meditative statement, 'When we have found all the mysteries and lost all the meaning, we will be alone, on an empty shore' (94). In the end, as Hannah's suggests: 'It's wanting to know that makes us matter' (75).

Arcadia continues Stoppard's interest in retelling history, a theme which is taken up again in *The Coast of Utopia*. Rather than simply being 'historical' and factual, however, Stoppard uses the historical context to investigate social issues, science, morals and other aspects of culture as reference points for his own work. Many of Stoppard's plays are attempts to explain the human condition and *Arcadia* is no exception. This self-referential drama shows characters attempting to explain life and the human condition from the point of view of science, mathematics, art and history. Stoppard is the ever-present original algorithm, and all the characters are reiterated algorithms of the playwright. In terms of fractal geometry, or the geometry of nature, Stoppard is the mountain and the characters are smaller, self-similar parts which mirror its geometry. The only difference is scale; each character can be one of Stoppard's personas.

It is characteristic of Stoppard's plays that further hypotexts are uncovered the more one looks into them, in the manner of a fractal pattern. With so many hypotexts in this play, the question of audience comprehension comes to the fore: 'Can the play be appreciated at different levels of awareness with respect to its content?' One answer to this question is that the staging of *Arcadia* provides ample entertainment for the first-time member of the audience of whatever age and however cognisant with the hypotexts. Another answer (implicit in the first) is that *Arcadia* has a multi-layered, palimpsestuous structure and repays the efforts of re-reading or re-viewing for those theatre-goers (or readers) who are interested in getting deeper into the issues raised. If one is aware of the hypotexts, they enrich the play with their allusions and provide added depth to the drama. Otherwise, they remain as a wealth of sources to be discovered later and enjoyed in their own right. (See Chapter 7, pp. 254–7)

Although individual perception and historical 'truth' is relative, Stoppard suggests in *Arcadia* that the necessity of morally accountable research is absolute, as clearly demonstrated by Bernard's imprudence. By allowing the audience to observe the evolution of Sidley Park, *Arcadia* opens the door for philosophical speculation on life as deterministic chaos, but it must also be remembered that order emerges from chaos and cannot exist without it. *Arcadia* therefore invites us to reflect on our own roles in life and our own accountability. Are we simply impotent cogs in the clockwork machine of determinism and fate, blindly following the indefinable whims of love and physical attraction, or do we have the ability (and responsibility) to set up morally defensible initial conditions that will produce self-similar patterns of reasonable behaviour at every level? Instead of choosing binary extremes, are we able to determine our own lives by transforming competing dualities into the middle, 'both/and' road of existence 'till there's no time left' (94)?

Chapter 5

Indian Ink: A Proper Country

5.1 Context

In its portrayal of the British Raj before and after Indian independence, *Indian Ink* (1995) 'gently exposes the unattractive side of British colonialism' (Palmer, 1998: 177), while demonstrating the 'inextricability of English and Indian identities' and the 'permeability of the membrane between past and present, India and England' (Russell, 2004: 2), in addition to testifying to the capacity of art to transcend imperialism. In so doing, the play extends the postcolonial debate on Empire, culture and imperialism, largely encapsulated in Homi K. Bhabha's statement that 'it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history – subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement – that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking' (1994: 246). A historical and dramatic contextualization of this play therefore requires consideration of the wider context of postcolonial literary and social discourse in general.

Postcolonialism, one of the crucial critical approaches in the 1990s when *Indian Ink* was first performed, has been defined as 'the study of the ideological and cultural impact of western colonialism and in particular of its aftermath – whether as a continuing influence (neo-colonialism) or in the emergence of newly articulated independent national and individual identities' (Brooker, 2003: 198). Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) describe the postcolonial as referring to 'all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization

to the present day' (quoted in Macey, 2000: 304). Largely triggered by Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) in which he 'called upon the literary establishment to raise questions about colonization, imperialism, and construction of the "other"' (Dobie, 2009: 207), postcolonial theory has attempted to examine 'what happens when one culture is dominated by another' (Dobie, 2009: 207). Stoppard in *Indian Ink* responds to these objectives by illustrating the continuity of effects of British rule in India on both the colonizers and the colonized, showing a dynamic, interactive and creative process of 'hybridity' or 'the emergences of concepts concerning a double, conflicted and transitional condition' (Brooker, 2003: 198) in culture, art and identity.

Questions concerning the role and ethics of British Empire are subtly expressed in Stoppard's play, which is neither completely critical nor approving, but rather recognises the complexity and interrelatedness of the issues. On the one hand, Stoppard's version of history can be read as India seeking to define its own literary and artistic identity amidst the colonizing force of the British Raj, though the many-stranded narrative of the play makes it clear that postcolonial culture is much more complex than such a reading would suggest. On the other hand, as Richard B. Russell argues, *Indian Ink* is significant as a reflection on 'a reconfigured English identity' (2004: 17), in its description of the continuing ambivalence and even conflict between 'old' white colonialism and a more recent cosmopolitan Englishness which is shared by the colonised and their descendants. Stoppard's 'particularized artistic theory of cultural hybridity' offers 'the promise and possibility of cultural reconciliation between English and Indian characters across two generations' (Russell, 2004: 16, 1), providing him with an opportunity to respond to previous theatrical representations of colonial history, such as in David Edgar's *Destiny* (1976).

Destiny and *Indian Ink* both address British imperialism and colonial hierarchy and refer to

the poems of Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), which both writers see as representative of the literature of British white settlers, reflecting the double-vision which 'views the world through the contrasting perspectives of both the colonizer and the colonized' (Dobie, 2009: 207–8). Both plays also look at the past, though from different perspectives; where Stoppard sees hope for reconciliation, Edgar's concern is to highlight cultural conflict and to document cultural attitudes and stereotypes. In doing this, Edgar's text makes overt political statements and promotes a particular social agenda by portraying a group of neo-fascist residents of the fictional Midlands town of Taddley. Exposure of the colonial roots of racism is explicit, using techniques such as the quoting of a speech of Adolf Hitler at the end of the play to evoke a parallel between Nazi anti-Semitism and the ideas and actions of the English Nation Forward Party – '*Nation Forward, Nazi Party*' (*Destiny* 376) – whose members concur on the Nazi concept of a Master Race (*Destiny* 390) and whip up racial prejudice against immigrants as 'a common enemy' (*Destiny* 354) in order to win votes in the coming by-election.

Destiny focuses on the marginalised members of society who belong to neither the colonized nor the colonizers. This situation has been described by Bhabha as 'the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world – the unhomeliness – that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations' (1994: 13). While *Indian Ink* is marked by its attention to ambiguity of identity and the emergence of a hybrid culture from the indigenous and the dominating ones, *Destiny* 'investigates the clash of cultures in which one culture deems itself to be the superior one and imposes its own practices on the less powerful one' (Dobie, 2009: 208). For example, in *Destiny*, a former British Army Sergeant in India who now leads a local nationalistic movement – the Taddley Patriotic League – is appointed as the Nation Forward Party candidate for his Midlands town for an upcoming by-election. Dennis Turner's xenophobic

paranoia against Asian immigrants is corroborated by like-minded local residents who demonstrate unthinking assumption of superiority along with fear of being taken over by the former colony – 'It is the silent majority who are suffering. In silence. As they watch their green and pleasant land become more and more like an Asian colony' (*Destiny* 353). Edgar's message is not confined to postcolonial prejudice; he also highlights a new kind of economic colonialism on the part of 'ruthless international speculators' (*Destiny* 361), 'the domination of our economy by a tiny clique of international capitalists – the very people who deliberately import cheap foreign labour and cheap foreign goods to undercut our wages and to throw us on the dole' (*Destiny* 363) and 'the creation of the multi-national monopolies' (*Destiny* 372). Edgar is equally critical of this neo-colonialism, which has much the same effect as traditional imperialism (Dobie, 2009: 207) and which presents a real threat to the living conditions of the play's white participants. As Edgar's analysis suggests, corporate neo-colonialism and outsourcing represents a reversal of roles between the colonizers and the colonized.

Destiny also features an example of diaspora caused by imperialism and labour migration, resulting in lack of assimilation to the host country, demonstrated through the eyes of Gurjeet Singh Khera, a former Indian servant at the British Army barrack where Turner was stationed and now a marginalized, immigrant worker at a Foundry. Khera strives to 'Keep faith in human virtue, while attempting to condone / The mother country's horror at her children coming home [. . .] once a slave / Returns to haunt the Empire's grave' (*Destiny* 346). Unlike Stoppard's Indian artists who form a mutual and equal friendship with their English counterparts, Khera, as the workers' union representative, seeks to resolve the company's discriminatory treatment towards unskilled Asian workers, only to be crushed by the management in collaboration with the Nation Forward Party. Khera's English reality reflects Bhabha's unhomely or unhomed (not homeless)

world and serves as a reminder of the continuity of past colonialism in its present form of racism:

> I come from Jullundur, the Punjab. Sikh upbringing. Train the children to be quiet, subservient, respectful. So, to England, land of tolerance and decency, and found it hard to understand. But last year, I went home, on holiday, to India. Saw, with new eyes, just what the English did. And then I understood. There is more British capital in India, today, than 30 years ago. It runs quite deep. Even the poor, white British, think that they, not just their masters, born to rule. And us, the blacks, the Irish, all of us – a lesser breed, without the Rule of Law. But that's your problem. (*Destiny* 395)

Khera's sense of unhomelines is reinforced by his realisation of the change his native culture has suffered during British cultural colonization and the process of 'Othering' – the assumption of the colonizers that 'those who are different from oneself are inferior beings' (Dobie, 2009: 217). Both Stoppard's and Edgar's visions attempt to uncover the significance of colonial and cultural assumptions and beliefs and their effect on human behaviour. In *Destiny*, Turner's Eurocentric colonialist view perceives both the colonized (in imperial India) and current immigrants as 'Demonic others', whereas in *Indian Ink*, past and present English female characters (Flora Crewe and Mrs Swan) perceive the Indian male characters (Nirad Das and Anish Das) as 'Exotic others', taking the view that 'those who are different from oneself possess an inherent dignity and beauty, perhaps because of their more underdeveloped, natural state of being' (Dobie, 2009: 217). In contrast to Edgar's social-realistic portrayal of 'the forces of fascism and their various opponents' (Edgar, 1994: viii), the vision in Stoppard's London is more optimistic, portraying 'what would or should happen' and proposing a positive reconciliation and blurring of hierarchical relations: 'It will make us friends' (*Indian Ink* 18), as the focus of attention shifts beyond political questions of imperialism to assertion of the transformational,

elevating and transcendent capacities that art potentially holds:

> Stoppard's imagined England of the late twentieth century, which accords more and more with actual English identity, is populated with a mixture of English, Indians, and Anglo-Indians. These citizens are breaking free of the simplistic colonizer/colonized model and achieving real human connections and relationships across a range of ages and beliefs. His powerful artistic invitation is for us to join them in this new country full of potential for human and political reconciliation. (Russell, 2004: 17–8)

Indian Ink was not alone in using 'the freedom of fiction' (Buse, 2001: 155) to shed light on Britain's imperial past, as can be seen in the 'cycle of film and television productions which emerged during the first half of the 1980s and which seemed to indicate Britain's growing preoccupation with India, Empire and a particular aspect of British cultural history' (McLuskie, 2011). According to The Museum of Broadcast Communications:

> These fictions were produced during, and indeed reflected, a moment of crisis and change in British life: mass unemployment, the arrival of new social and class configurations tied to emerging political and economic trends all conspired to destabalise and recast notions of national and cultural identity in the early 1980s. While often critical of Britain's past, these fictions nevertheless permitted a nostalgic gaze back to a golden age, presenting a vision of Empire as something great and glorious. These fictions seemed to offer reassurance to the British public, as cultural fetish objects they helped negotiate and manage a moment of social and political upheaval. (McLuskie, 2011)

Among the television films, *The Jewel in the Crown* was broadcast in 1984 as a Granada TV series dealing with the final days of the British Raj in India during the World War II. Based on Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet* (1966), the central image is of 'a white English girl running in the

dark from an alleged sexual assault by an Indian man' (Russell, 2004: 3). In the same year, *The Far Pavilions* was a three-part serial drama adapted from M. M. Kaye's 1978 novel of the same title. (Art Malik who played the role of Nirad Das in *Indian Ink* appears in both television plays.) Previously, *Shakespeare Wallah*, a 1965 film featuring Felicity Kendal (who played the role of Flora Crewe in *Indian Ink* and to whose mother Stoppard's play is dedicated), followed the story of a British family-run Shakespearean acting troupe travelling in postcolonial India and includes the daughter's romantic involvement with an Indian youth, who is also in love with a Bollywood film star.[61] *Heat and Dust*, a 1983 screen adaptation of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's 1975 Booker Prize winning novel, has a similar artistic framework to *Indian Ink* in that a present-day researcher (Anne) is seen investigating and paralleling the life of an independent, wilful English woman (Anne's great aunt Olivia) in the colonial India of the 1920s. Through crosscutting and overlapping scenes, the lives of the two women living more than fifty years apart dovetail into each other.[62] *Gandhi* (1982) and *A Passage to India* (1984, based on E. M. Forster's 1924 novel which provided Scott with his central crisis point in *The Jewel in the Crown*) were other influential films about Empire that emerged at this time.

A decade before Stoppard's play, Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good* (1988) – itself a dramatic adaptation, commissioned by the Royal Court Theatre, of Thomas Keneally's historiographical metafiction *The Playmaker* (1987) – had taken as its subject the early history of

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[61] This plot is based on Felicity Kendal's own life: her parents ran a touring theatre company, playing Shakespeare across India.

[62] In present day London, Harry, once a confidant to the prince Nawab and now an elderly gentleman, is visited by Anne before her passage to India, just as Stoppard's Mrs Swan is visited by Pike before his departure for India. While following her ancestress' trails in India, Anne finds herself romantically entangled with her Indian landlord, Inder Lal, overlapping Olivia's scandalous love affair with the Nawab.

the former penal colony of Australia, where convicts participate in the production of George Farqhuar's *The Recruiting Officer* which 'is clearly an escape from the harsh rigours of colonial life' (Buse, 2001: 156).[63] Although not necessarily a direct influence on Stoppard and though it refers to different geographical locations, *Our Country's Good* offers instructive insights into *Indian Ink*'s portrayal of 'dissenting and dissonant opinions about the relative value of culture', concluding that 'the collective weight of these voices [. . .] serves to confirm [. . .] that culture is distinct from imperialism' (Buse, 2001: 162). As in *Indian Ink*, Wertenbaker looks back to the earlier work, providing a double perspective to her play. There are also stylistic and focal links between the two plays: the 'multi-vocality' in *Our Country's Good*, in which 'it presents many different voices without privileging any single one' (Buse, 2001: 161) as well as 'its openness to different interpretations' and its assertion of 'the theme of the redemptive value of art' (Buse, 2001: 166, 167) all point to a similar approach employed in *Indian Ink* in order to open up and engage with a continuing dialogue between the postcolonial present and the imperial past.

To conclude this introduction to *Indian Ink*, it can be said that the play offers an alternative perspective to colonial history in terms of 'mutually defining identities' (Brooker, 2003: 199) or 'culturally hybrid social identities' (Bhabha, 1994: 359), constructed around ambiguous encounters between its English and Indian characters. Stoppard's version of history is instructive in offering 'additional insight into colonialist and anticolonialist thinking' (Dobie, 2009: 209) and might even be aligned with Bhabha's articulation, in *The Location of Culture* (1994), of a postcolonial perspective and awareness:

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[63] See Peter Buse's analysis, 'Culture and Colonies – Wertenbaker with Said' (153–71) in *Drama + Theory: Critical Approaches to Modern British Drama* (2001) published by Manchester University Press, which shows how *Our Country's Good* responds to Edward Said's arguments in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994).

> It forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres. It is from this hybrid location of cultural value – the transnational as the translational – that the postcolonial intellectual attempts to elaborate a historical and literary project. (1994: 248)

5.2 Overview

> You see how privileged we are, Miss Crewe. Only in art can empires cheat oblivion, because only the artist can say, 'Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!'
>
> Nirad Das, *Indian Ink*, 1995: 44[64]

Indian Ink is Stoppard's two-act stage adaptation of his nineteen-scene radio play, *In the Native State*, broadcast on BBC Radio Three on 21 April 1991. An example of '*extension*' or a type of literary augmentation by addition (Genette, 1997: 254), *Indian Ink* had its first performance at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford and opened at the Aldwych Theatre, London, on 27 February 1995, directed by Peter Wood with Felicity Kendal (as Flora Crewe) and Art Malik (as Nirad Das). Stoppard completed the radio play after he finished directing the film adaptation of *R&G* (1991) and has explained how it originated:

> I had this tiny notion that I could write a conversation between a poet and a painter. While the poet was having her portrait painted, she would be writing a poem about having her portrait painted. There would be this circular situation. That's all I had. [. . .] I think simultaneously I'd been thinking about a play about the Raj, or at least during the time of the British Empire. Things coalesced. (Gussow, 1995: 120)

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[64] Quotations from the play are from *Indian Ink*, published by Faber & Faber and reprinted with corrections in 1995. Further citations from this text are parenthetically referenced by page number.

Stoppard wrote *Indian Ink* with 'quite a nostalgia for the heat and the smells and the sounds of India', where he lived as a child from the age of four to the age of eight, leaving shortly before India gained its independence (Gussow, 1995: 131). He has remarked that 'India is the only Empire country I would want to write about in any way [and] the country has always fascinated me' (Allen, 1991). The two plays draw partly on his childhood memories, although the well-rounded Indian characters derive mainly from his reading.

In the Native State provided Stoppard with 'a chance to reflect on the social and cultural themes of empire, race and the kind of love eventually found by some of his characters' (Allen, 1991). After *Arcadia*, Stoppard revised and expanded the radio play for the stage, renaming it *Indian Ink*, which he remarked 'is in the radio play as the title of [the poet]'s posthumous volume [and] then I thought *Indian Ink* was a good title so I put it into her poem' (Gussow, 1995: 128). This poem, which the main female character writes while the main male character paints her in the nude, took Stoppard 'far longer than you'd believe' to write, because he 'found the idea of her poetry so perversely enjoyable' (Reynolds, *Daily Telegraph*, 20 April 1991, p. 24).

At the heart of the play lies the poet Flora Crewe's activities in Jummapur in 1930 India, including her relations and dealings with the Indian painter Nirad Das, the British army officer Captain Durance and the Indian Rajah. Conversations between Das's son (Anish Das) and Flora's younger sister (Mrs Swan) in the mid-1980s form another strand, while Eldon Pike's role as both the supplier of footnotes and the pursuer of biographical material forms the other. The question which underpins the play is whether the British Empire benefited or destroyed native Indian culture and its art, and Stoppard provides insight into this complex issue through the juxtaposition of cross-cultural characterisations and references. As 'another of Stoppard's

dramatized debates' (Lee, 2001: 39), *Indian Ink* offers a series of positions towards and varying perspectives on the effects of British colonization of India. While juxtaposing two sets of past and present narratives with a wide range of issues concerning poetry and painting, cultural contrasts and individual perceptions, the play addresses, through cinematic images such as voice-overs and cross-cutting scenes, a complex pattern of Anglo-Indian lives and paradoxes. The social, cultural and historical mediation of England in the creation of Anglo-Indian identities and postcolonial hybrid cultures comes to the fore in this reflection on the politics of Empire.

The term 'Anglo-Indian' can be defined as 'a person of British birth resident, or once long resident, in the Indian subcontinent'; 'pertaining to, or characteristic of India under British rule'; '(of a word) adopted into English from an Indian language' (*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 2007: 82). Anglo-Indian paradoxes are effectively dramatised in this play, using cultural, artistic, political and literary hypertextuality as a dramatic tool, linking and overlapping the hypertext with authentic and symbolic hypotexts related to Anglo-Indian relationships. In this way, the play investigates a diversity of themes, including 'the ethics of Empire', the relationship between art and politics, the nature of love, differences in individual perceptions and the difficulty of researching the past.

In addition to re-contextualising and referring to pre-existing Anglo-Indian literature – particularly E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) and Emily Eden's two-volume travel journal *Up the Country* (1866) – Stoppard deepens the level of investigation by creatively using a number of cultural references and allusions to English literature, European and Indian paintings (see section 5.4, p. 170) and the Indian aesthetic of '*rasa*' – a Sanskrit word and a crucial notion in the play. As the Indian painter Das explains, *rasa* is 'juice. Its taste. Its essence' or aesthetically, 'what you must feel when you see a painting, or hear music; the emotion which the artist must

arouse in you' (29). Stoppard also alludes to the influence of Hindu religion on Indian art, paralleling that of Anglo-Indian history and politics.

Indian Ink contemplates who we are and how we define ourselves and others as it shifts between time, location and perspective and as the playwright investigates 'clashing viewpoints and interweaving of human lives against the background of the rise of Indian nationalism and the decline of British control' (Carter, *Tribune-Review*, 14 August 2002). The play is also full of linguistic doubling, Stoppardian wit and humour, puns, double-meanings and other ambiguities. Comic moments arise from the cross-cultural interactions between characters who speak the same language differently (British, Indian and American English), exposing the different cultural assumptions that lie behind their behaviour. This linguistic contrast gradually diminishes as the play progresses and as similarities emerge among the characters, all of whom employ words from 'Hobson-Jobson', a glossary of Anglo-Indian words and phrases used in India, an example of Anglo-Indian hybridization.[65]

5.3 Structure

5.3.1 Doubling of characters, time lines and locations

A multiplicity of themes, structures and levels can be identified in *Indian Ink*. As Christopher Innes suggests, the play portrays at one level the intimate and 'mutually liberating relationship' in 1930s India between a free-spirited and emancipated English poet and a young, respectful Indian painter. On a wider level this becomes 'a metaphor for the English love-affair

[65] I am using Bakhtin's definition of hybridization as 'the mixing, within a single concrete utterance, of two or more different linguistic consciousnesses, often widely separated in time and social space' (Clark and Holquist, 1984: 429).

with "the Raj" and India's fascination with England' (2002: 414–5). Flora, who has made her reputation writing erotic poetry, travels to India to improve her health and finds a new meaning for love, 'the juices are starting to flow again' (78), as expressed in a letter written in the last days before her early death. Das, whose concept of art is overwhelmed by English and European models, learns to value his native heritage and Indian identity through her love.

On yet another level, the play is a conscious and dualistic investigation into 'the nature of history and the way the past is rewritten' (Innes, 2002: 415), both through Flora's reliving of the experiences of a well-known nineteenth-century traveller (Emily Eden) (doubling of characters and time lines), and by combining the 1930s story with the descendants of the two main characters more than five decades later (further character doubling). One set of English/Indian, female/male characters (Mrs Swan and Anish, a painter, like his father) exists in parallel with the other set of English/Indian, female/male characters (Flora and Nirad Das), both sets being involved in artistic and political exchanges. As Mrs. Swan and Anish attempt to find the truth regarding the relationship between Flora and Das, their search is also doubled by and contrasted with that of Pike, an over-enthusiastic American academic, who is trying to reconstruct Flora's life in order to write her biography. In addition to doubling between characters in the play, doubling of real and fictional characters outside the play (for example, Emily Eden and Adela Quested) occurs.[66]

Indian Ink alternates between pre-independent India in 1930, and England and post-independent India in the mid-1980s. Stoppard notes in the list of characters page of the published play (1995) that '[it] is not intended that the stage be demarcated between India and England, or past and present. Floor space, and even furniture, may be common'. As Hodgson identifies, the

[66] See section 5.4 of this chapter, p. 170.

play gains power from the subtle juxtaposition of parallel history and from gradual revelation of mysterious past events, enacted and narrated in Flora's letters, dated 1930 (2001: 154). In Stoppard's words, the 'theatricality of [. . .] shuttling between time periods' in the play presents 'some kind of ambush involved in the experience' and creates 'situations which [. . .] perhaps would be not that interesting if they were not in counterpoint to another perspective' (Farnsworth, 1999).

One of the devices employed in the play to establish this juxtaposition and subtle counterpoint of different perspectives is the film-editing technique of cross-cutting, which allows the playwright to cross temporal and spatial boundaries on stage. Since cross-cut scenes happen one after another, they are used either to create parallels between actions that do not take place at the same time or to illustrate an action that occurs in different locations at the similar time, encouraging viewers to be aware of differences between the two parallel actions.

Stoppard acquired 'the visual grammar of film' from his screenwriting experiences and elements such as 'the use of rapid fire exchanges of dialogue, cuts in structure, and sudden shifts in scenes' (Nadel, 2001: 88–9) feature in his plays, extending and sharpening 'his sense of visual realisation' (Kelly, 2001: 15). Presumably, the fact that he has written and directed a film script (*R&G*) must also have made him more aware of how films work. Earlier experiences in radio and television drama also refined his sense of cinematic structure. From radio drama, which primarily appeals to the imaginative mind of the listeners, Stoppard adopted temporal and spatial motifs, making it possible to overlap or shift freely between different time periods and locations in a non-linear manner, and from television drama, he learned how to intermingle the factual with the fictional, blurring and diminishing the boundaries between the two on stage.

An example of cross-cutting and resultant doubling and blurring of time lines can be seen at

the beginning of Act 1, when the past and present are duplicated in a 'story-within-a-story' frame. Flora briefly disappears when Mrs Swan and Pike are having a conversation about her letters, but soon reappears when they '*continue to read in silence*' (3). She then approaches, resuming her voice-overs and her enactment of the letter that the modern characters are reading. In both Acts the play cross-cuts between the activities of Pike in modern-day India and Flora in the past. The scene of Pike and his guide Dilip, a local Indian professor of English literature, in '*the garden/courtyard of the Jummapur Palace Hotel, which was formerly the Palace of the Rajah of Jummapur*' (57) is immediately followed by the scene of Flora and the Rajah of Jummapur in 1930 India (60–4). The action then cuts to the same location, fifty-five years later, when Pike meets the Rajah's grandson. This leads to another contrast and juxtaposition, cross-cutting to England, where Mrs Swan and Anish are talking about what Pike has just heard from the Rajah's grandson in India (66–8). Meaning and continuity is added to this cross-cutting of scenes by making some characters consistent from colonial to post-colonial India. Thus, a waiter '*decked out in the authentic livery of the old regime*' who serves Dilip and Pike at the Hotel also serves Flora and the Rajah at the Palace. In this way, '*the Servants operate freely between the two periods*' (57) as noted in Stoppard's stage directions.

Doubling of location can be also observed in the overall circular structure of the play. The final scene, in which Flora departs from the Jummapur station platform after Mr Coomaraswami, the President of Theosophical Society, garlands her and takes leave of her, echoes the play's opening scene where she was greeted (on her arrival) with 'garlands of marigolds at the ready' (1) followed by enthusiastic handshakes by Mr Coomaraswami. Both scenes take place on the small station platform, while Flora's letters are heard in her voice-overs and simultaneously enacted on stage.

5.3.2 The function of Pike: bridging and representing dualities

Pike functions in *Indian Ink* as investigator of the fictional hypotext of Flora's writings, but he is also representative of misinformed academic research. When he analyzes Flora's texts, misunderstandings arise because he is unaware of the larger context. Mrs Swan and Anish, together with the audience, manage to fill in the missing gaps about Flora's past, but Pike remains in the dark, depending largely on Mrs Swan for many of his footnotes on Flora's life:

> PIKE: There isn't a page which doesn't need – look – you see here? – 'I had a funny dream last night about the Queen's Elm.' Which Queen? What elm? Why was she dreaming about a tree? So this is where I come in, wearing my editor's hat. To lighten the darkness.
> MRS SWAN: It's a pub in the Fulham Road.
> PIKE: Thank you. (4)

Like the English don (Bernard) in *Arcadia*, who jumps to conclusions about Byron and then publishes a paper on the topic, this American academic, who is the editor of *The Collected Poems* and *The Collected Letters of Flora Crewe* and would-be biographer of Flora, pursues a similar search for information as he tries to find out whether Das painted her in the nude and whether she had a sexual relationship with Das, or with Durance, or perhaps with the Rajah. Pike and his footnotes reflect Stoppard's self-referential technique of having 'the commentator making points about the material which he is part of', which he also uses in *The Real Inspector Hound* and in *R&G*, as 'the device of having a voice outside the play, though belonging to a character in the play' (Gussow, 1995: 117).

Pike's role is (like the play itself) multi-layered. At first sight he appears to be (like Bernard in *Arcadia*) a parody of a narrow-focused academic, pursuing research solely in the interest of

publishing, 'This is why God made poets and novelists, so the rest of us can get published' (4).[67] Being always outside the action looking in, it is easy for him to be seen as irrelevant to the 'real' action, as when Stoppard has him shouted off the stage by Flora, who says 'Oh, shut up!' as if '*she has turned on PIKE. Simultaneously, DAS, losing his temper, is shouting in Hindi, "Get off! Get off!" But they are both shouting at a couple of unseen pi-dogs*' (34).

On another level, however, Pike can be seen as a comic parody of Stoppard's own hypotextual research – a self-referential doubling of the playwright, enthusiastically trying to reconstruct the past, searching for connections and trying to make sense of isolated scraps of evidence. By the end of the play, Stoppard finally empathizes with Pike (and therefore with himself), acknowledging their shared difficulty in recovering the past. In this sense, Pike's role is metadramatic, showing the researcher (Pike) within the researcher (Stoppard) and the play emerges as a self-referential commentary on Stoppard's own hypertextual practice.

It is often assumed that Stoppard puts his own words into the mouths of his characters, having them voice the perspectives that he wishes. When Mrs. Swan says that '*biography* is the worst possible excuse for getting people wrong' (5) or 'Far too much of a good thing, in my opinion, the footnotes; to be constantly interrupted by someone telling you things you already know or don't need to know at that moment' (25–6), we can catch sight of Stoppard's own thoughts emerging. However, as already mentioned, a feature of the Bakhtinian notion of a 'polyphony of fully valid voices' is that characters exist as 'free people, capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him' (1984: 6). When Mrs. Swan and Anish decide not to tell Pike the whole story about the existence

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[67] Laurie Kaplan describes Pike and Bernard as such '[t]hinkers suffering from the "critical disease" of delving for facts and discussing the private lives of Doers' (1998: 338).

of the nude portrait (80), it is as if they are withholding this information from Stoppard himself and making decisions independently of him.

In addition to the use of authentic hypotexts (Forster and Eden) in the play, Stoppard also shows Pike researching a fictional hypotext (Flora's poetry) created by the playwright himself. In this sense, Pike 'adds a dimension of spurious reality' (Stoppard quoted in Twisk, *Observer*, 21 April 1991, p. 75) and makes it easier for the audience to follow the play as a whole, bridging as he does the dualities and the characters of the past and the present. After visiting Mrs Swan, Pike's journey takes him to modern-day India, providing a theatrical overlap of places and time periods. His quest for additional facts and information about Flora's life for her biography, as Stoppard remarks, adds to the theatrical dynamics of the play:

> I think it justifies the play, a play which would otherwise float between India then and an old lady in a garden in a London suburb now. Just thinking of the theatrical dynamics, it gives the play a big kick when it needs it. Fifty minutes in, suddenly there are a lot of neon signs and traffic noise, and a character who is in one part of the play turns up in another part of the play. (Gussow, 1995: 128)

Accordingly, through the character of Pike, Stoppard illuminates the 'difficulties and fallibility involved in trying to reconstruct the past' (Fleming, 2001: 212). Pike also provides the unifying and bridging perspective of an outsider looking in, a role that once more doubles Stoppard's position in relation to English and Indian society and culture. Just as Pike creates a fuller integration of the two time periods and the characters, and just as he gradually gets drawn into the action, relinquishing his role of observer, so we can see Stoppard interacting with two cultures which exist in his own personal history, at first as an observer and later as a participant,

'being a part of two cultures simultaneously' (Bull, 1994: 201) and portraying the complexities and contradictions of those cultures.

5.4 Hypertextuality: the use of Anglo-Indian literature and art

Indian Ink exhibits 'thematic extension and stylistic expansion' (Genette, 1997: 262) from the radio version. Both expose the legacy of the Raj and show the poet and painter set against the background of the approaching end of British rule, raising 'questions about divergent cultures and codes of conduct', with Flora manifesting 'artistic and personal integrity' (Gussow, 1995: 117). Stoppard indicated that he wanted 'to avoid writing Indian characters who appear to have already appeared' in other people's work since 'the whole Anglo-Indian world has been so raked over and presented and re-presented [and] because my conscious knowledge of how Indians speak and behave has actually been derived from other people's fictions' (Allen, 1991).

The texture of *Indian Ink* is enriched by its hypertextual nature and polyphonic design. In addition to all the characters' different voices and Stoppard's own voice on art, love and history, a polyphony of other writers' voices (Forster, Eden, Kipling, Shelley, Housman, MacNeice) can be heard, enhancing the counterpoint of the argument in the play through textual allusions and quotations. Stoppard estimates that before he became involved in writing the play he read about '50 or 60 books vaguely related', which were 'largely factual: autobiographies, biographies, histories' (Gussow, 1995: 138, 125–6).[68] The only fiction he 're-read at one point' as a major

[68] Stoppard gives a short list of his source materials: 'There's *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* by Chaudhuri, 900 pages, a wonderful book. Mark Tully of the BBC wrote a book called *No Full Stops in India*. I looked into two of Naipaul's books about India. Charles Allen's *Scrapbooks of the Raj* are wonderful source material: picture books of old photographs and advertisements from the time' (in Gussow, 1995: 125–6).

source was Forster's *A Passage to India*, one of the best-known accounts in English on the subject of Anglo-Indian relationships, which Stoppard says he has always regarded as 'a wonderful book. I love Forster':

> it's hanging over the play like an unacknowledged ghost. It turned out to be rather convenient. I set the play in 1930 without thinking about the fact that *A Passage to India* had been published in 1924. I think I felt, well I'd better get this one into the open. (in Gussow, 1995: 126)

Two moments of illumination occurring in *Indian Ink* point to its Forsterian hypotext. The first of these is Flora's discovery of a new meaning for love, which occurs after Das shows her the nude portrait of herself. The ambiguity surrounding this event suggests comparison with the incident of the Marabar Caves in Forster's text, through which the Indian male character becomes confident of his identity, though the intensity and outcome of the event are far less extreme in Stoppard's text. *A Passage to India*, set in the fictional city of Chandrapore in British India, deals with the cultural mistrust which dooms the friendship between English and Indian people within the context of British colonialism, whereas *Indian Ink* suggests an alternative possibility of friendship through mutual artistic inspiration. *Indian Ink* also draws on *A Passage to India* to project the moment of illumination for Das, an Indian character who is overwhelmed by European paintings and enthralled with English literature. When Das becomes unhesitatingly articulate in describing '*rasa*' to Flora, she is impressed by his confident attitude and says:

> FLORA: Mr Das, you sounded just like somebody else. Yourself, I expect. I knew you could. The other one reminded me of Dr Aziz in Forster's novel. Have you read it? I kept wanting to kick him.

DAS: (*Offended*) Oh . . .

FLORA: For not knowing his worth.

DAS: Then perhaps you didn't finish it.

FLORA: Yes, perhaps. Does he improve?

DAS: He alters.

FLORA: What is your opinion of *A Passage To India*? (30)

This allusion to the Indian physician Dr Aziz foreshadows and parallels a forthcoming (though different) alteration in Das. In *A Passage to India*, the inquisitive yet repressed Englishwoman (Adela) has a moment of uncertain hallucination during a visit to the Marabar Caves, and Aziz is falsely accused of attempted assault and rape, after which he is arrested and goes to trial. Although Aziz is later proved innocent after Adela admits her mistake, this incident completely changes his perceptions of English people and he remains sceptical about continuing his previous friendship with the Englishman, Cyril Fielding. Whereas Aziz's alteration is the result of a painful experience, Das's experience in Stoppard's text is gentler. The play elusively implies that he spent the night with Flora after they shared the '*rasa*', aroused by the nude portrait. We are also told that Das later goes to trial due to his 'conspiring to cause a disturbance at the Empire Day celebrations in Jummapur in 1930' (67), only because he threw 'a mango!' (57) at the Residency car.

Another important hypotext continuously evoked and referred to in the play, *Up the Country*, is a collection of letters written in India by Emily Eden, who first travelled to India in 1835 with her brother, the governor-general, paralleling Flora's experiences in 1930 India. Stoppard read 'the entire two volumes' of the book (Gussow, 1995: 129) and uses it in the play as a bridge, linking the present with the past and India with England, while also overlapping different generations. In Act 1, Das gives Flora a copy of this book, '*an old but well-preserved book*

[which] is green with a brown spine' (16) that was previously his father's. Flora is pleased and keeps it beside her bed. In Act 2, Mrs Swan informs Anish of the book, '[g]reen with a brown spine' (68), which induces Pike's footnote about Eden's tour (68–9). Later, Durance also picks it up and says that Emily Eden reminds him of Flora (77). Two pages later, Mrs Swan gives it to Anish and says, 'This is yours. It belonged to your father' (79). Finally, Flora's recorded reading of quotations from Book Two of *Up the Country* ends the play, summing up Anglo-Indian paradoxes and the varying perceptions of them.

> (*Recorded*) 'Simla, Saturday, May 25th, 1839. The Queen's Ball "came off" yesterday with great success [. . .] we one hundred and five Europeans being surrounded by at least three thousand Indians, who looked on at what we call our polite amusement, and bowed to the ground if a European came near them. I sometimes wonder they do not cut all our heads off and say nothing more about it.' (83) (Eden, 1983: 292–4)

This flashback to Eden's text deepens and completes the historical parallel between her 'official progress up country' (68) and Flora's tour 'up the country' (48), a doubling which is implied in the play. Stoppard explained his intentions in finishing the play with Eden's text:

> The flavour I get off the play finally, I suppose because the last word is given to a real person called Emily Eden, who travelled around India in the mid-nineteenth century, because the last word is given to her and because it's caustic about the British and – what she actually says is she can't understand why the Indians don't cut all our heads off and think nothing more about it. Because that's the last word, I suppose the flavour of it is that *our* perspective on India actually distorts our own importance in the long run. (Allen, 1991)

In addition to the play's two main hypotexts, lines from other British writers enhance the

historical parallels and commentary on the complexity of Anglo-Indian relationships. Frequent references to well-known authors (Virginia Woolf, George Bernard Shaw, Robert Browning, Tennyson, Shakespeare, Agatha Christie, Charles Dickens) and the mixing of fictional characters with real figures blur 'the distinction between characters who existed and characters that did not' (Stoppard quoted in Gussow, 1995: 130), providing a realistic setting and making the play's characters more credible. An example of this linking and cross-reference occurs in Flora's poem 'Pearl', written in the flow of *rasa* and inspired by her artistic and personal love of Das's art (the nude portrait of herself). A line of the poem includes a phrase '*et nos cedamus amori* . . .' (75) from Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, which is mentioned earlier by the Resident in Jummapur in reference to his time as a student at Trinity, when Housman 'hauled' him through the books (47):

> FLORA: (*Pleased*) Oh, yes – the Art of Love!
>
> RESIDENT: When it comes to love, Housman said, you're either an Ovid man or a Virgil man – *omnia vincit amor et nos cedamus amori* – you can't win against love; we give in to it. That's Virgil. Housman was an Ovid man – *et mihi cedet amor* – 'Love won't win against me!'
>
> FLORA: I'm a Virgil man.
>
> RESIDENT: Are you? Well, you make friends more quickly that way. (48)

This reference to Housman, a poet and eminent critic of Latin literature, reflects one of the play's main themes – the different notions of the nature of love – and anticipates Stoppard's next play (*The Invention of Love*) in which he develops the theme by juxtaposing Houseman's perception of love and writings with the contemporary but contrasting voice of Wilde.

Indian Ink quotes several poems which illustrate the play's theme of Anglo-Indian relationships and which provide a polyphony of voices from the past on this topic. The first

example of this device occurs when an Englishman at the Jummapur Club quotes the last stanza of *Gunga Din* (48), one of Kipling's most famous poems, written in 1892. Written from the viewpoint of a British soldier, *Gunga Din* tells of a native water-bearer, who saves the soldier's life but dies himself. Although the British narrator praises the Indian for his virtues, he at the same time ironically discloses his racism against the native people that the water bearer represents. Another poem, *Bagpipe Music*, by Oxford-educated Louis MacNeice is imitated by Pike when commenting on the process of his academic research:

> It's no go the records of the Theosophical Society, it's no go the newspaper files partitioned to ashes . . . All we want is the facts and to tell the truth in our fashion. . . Her knickers were made of crepe-de-Chine, her poems were up in Bow Street, her list of friends laid end to end . . . weren't in it for the poetry. But it's no go the watercolour, it's no go the Modigliani . . . The glass is falling hour by hour, and we're back in the mulligatawny . . . But we will leave no Das unturned. He had a son. (75)

Shelley's poem *Ozymandias* (1817) is also used as a hypotext, creating different layers of emotional association and meaningful commentary in the context of *Indian Ink*:

> DAS: [. . .] Well, the Empire will one day be gone like the Mughal Empire before it, and only their monuments remain – the visions of Shah Jahan! – of Sir Edwin Lutyens!
>
> FLORA: 'Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!'
>
> DAS: (*Delighted*) Oh yes! Finally like the empire of Ozymandias! Entirely forgotten except in a poem by an English poet. You see how privileged we are, Miss Crewe. Only in art can empires cheat oblivion, because only the artist can say, 'Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!' (44)

Shelly's *Ozymandias* is known for presenting its theme through vivid symbolism rather than

stating it, to be interpreted in the reader's mind as 'a comment on the vanity of human wishes; on the irony of human pride and power; on the brevity of human life; and perhaps too on the immortality of the art which remains to carry these reminders to future generations of mortal men' (Kim, 1987: 746). The inscription on the base of the monument, 'Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!' meant to Ozymandias, 'Despair of matching my achievements', but to the reader, who sees the sad end to which all human vanity must come, the message means, 'Despair of defying time's destruction' (Kim, 1987: 748). This ironic inscription works as a metaphor for the disappearing power of the British Empire while confirming the lasting value of art, which is one of the crucial themes explored in *Indian Ink*. Stoppard's references to earlier works of English literature – spanning the Romantic period to the twentieth-century – all include some element of comment, overt or implied, on the irony of the power of the Empire and the immortality of art. The wide-ranging uses of hypertextual references in *Indian Ink* highlights these themes as well as the conflicts within the relationships between people and cultures.

5.5 Polyphony of perceptions: the key image and the key moment

The concept of '*rasa*', encountered by chance by Stoppard 'in a book about Indian art' (Gussow, 1995: 127), is central to the play and is first referred to by Das, in Act 1, when he mentions the three conditions necessary for arousing Shringara, the *rasa* of erotic love:

> The *rasa* of erotic love is called Shringara. Its god is Vishnu, and its colour is *shyama*, which is blue-black. [. . .] Shringara requires, naturally a lover and his loved one [. . .] and it is aroused by, for example, the moon, the scent of sandalwood, or being in an empty house. (30)

The most dynamic image in *Indian Ink* which contains this '*rasa*' and its three conditions is the nude painting of Flora, executed by Das in the manner of Rajasthani art (Indian watercolour miniature painting) and returned to at various times in the play as a focus for differing perceptions on art, love and history. It might be said that the essential debate at the heart of the play – 'It's your country, and we've got it' (45), as Flora tells Das – is exemplified in this second, 'secret' painting.

The first, clothed portrait, painted in the European Pre-Raphaelite style, neither pleases Flora nor Mrs Swan, who describes it as 'fairly ghastly, like an Indian cinema poster' (10). Flora sees this painting 'as a gift, to please' her (45) and criticises what she perceives as Das's enthrallment with western culture, 'trying to paint me from my point of view instead of yours – what you *think* is my point of view. You *deserve* the bloody Empire!' (43). Flora tells him to 'learn to take no notice' of what others think of his painting and to 'stick up for yourself' (43) and encourages Das to be aware of his identity as an Indian and as an Indian artist: 'If you don't start learning to *take* you'll never be shot of us. *Who whom*. Nothing else counts' (45). As Das replies, however, he likes the Pre-Raphaelites, 'because they tell stories. That is my tradition, too. I am Rajasthani. Our art is narrative art, stories from the legends and romances' (45). In this sense, he is adapting aspects of western painting to that of his own culture, rather than blindly mimicking the art of the colonists. Similar artistic exchanges about the indispensable features of Indian art and the aesthetics of '*rasa*' help Das to question whether the British actually benefited India or destroyed its civilisation and culture: '[t]he bloody Empire finished off Indian painting!' (44). His realization of British exploitation deepens: 'Perhaps we have been robbed [. . .] The women here wear saris made in Lancashire. The cotton is Indian but we cannot compete in the weaving' (44).

Das expounds on painting and Indian poems of love, while relating the history of Indian art

to that of England through his knowledge of English literature. The mention of *Gita Govinda*, a famous series of Rajasthani miniatures and 'the favourite book of the Rajput painters [. . .] which tells the story of Krishna and Radha' (45) builds up the cross-cultural interface between the English poet and the Indian artist, leading to the key moment of the play, when Das presents the second nude portrait to Flora, and they look at it in the moonlight:

> DAS: (*Nervous, bright*) Yes! A good joke, is it not? A Rajput miniature, by Nirad Das!
> FLORA: (*Not heeding him*) Oh . . . it's the most beautiful thing . . .
> DAS: (*Brightly*) I'm so pleased you like it! A quite witty pastiche –
> FLORA: (*Heeding him*) Are you going to be Indian? Please don't.
> DAS: (*Heeding her)* I . . . I am Indian.
> FLORA: An Indian artist.
> DAS: Yes.
> FLORA: Yes. This one is for yourself.
> DAS: Yes. You are not offended?
> FLORA: No, I'm pleased. It has *rasa*. (74)

This is a moment of recognition for Flora, and she identifies herself with Radha in *Gita Govinda*, 'who was the most beautiful of the herdswoman, undressed for love in an empty house' (83), which enhances the previously built interface between the two artists. Stoppard then links the past to the present and shows the differences in perceptions when Mrs Swan and Anish react to the painting:

> (*He opens his briefcase and withdraws the watercolour which is hardly larger than the page of a book, protected by stiff boards. He shows her the painting which is described in the text.*)
> MRS SWAN: Oh heavens! Oh . . . yes . . . *of course*. How like Flora.
> ANISH: More than a good likeness, Mrs Swan.
> MRS SWAN: No . . . I mean, *how like Flora*! (41)

Mrs Swan sees the painting 'as particular as an English miniature', whereas Anish interprets it 'in the language of symbols' of Hindu art and tells Mrs Swan that Flora is in 'a house within a house' ('a mosquito net'), while a book on the pillow (by Emily Eden) and the flowering vine respectively symbolize Flora and Flora's death (68). Mrs Swan says that, 'sometimes a vine is only a vine' (68), as this scene comically questions the subjectivity of perception. Dilip is also unable to see beyond his prejudices and perceptions and when Pike suggests that Das painted Flora nude, he replies, 'In 1930, an Englishwoman, an Indian painter . . . it is out of the question' (59). Pike's assertion that Das and Flora had a '*relationship*' amuses Dilip, who tries to correct Pike, 'You are constructing an edifice of speculation on a smudge of paint on paper, which no longer exits' (59), which is an irony since (although Pike is not told this by Anish or Mrs Swan) the nude portrait does exist.

An example of hybridization between 'contrasting cultural visions', this nude portrait takes from European and Indian styles of paintings and alters them by harmoniously mixing the two (Innes, 2002: 415). As Fleming observes, it is 'the hybridization that marks it as a personal work of art, one that encapsulates Das's duality (an admirer of English art but also an Indian nationalist) as well as Flora's (an Englishwoman who thinks India should have the right to self-determination)' (2001: 214). In this way, Stoppard condenses his ideas into a kind of art metaphor, along with the many references to Modigliani, the Pre-Raphaelites and the *Gita Govinda.* The portrait is, as it were, a miniature of the play itself, a key image of and in the play, serving as the focus of all the cultural, temporal, spatial and personal themes.

A post-colonial perspective on the Anglo-Indian hybrid identity, both 'Anglo' and 'Indian' in nature, appears in the highly Anglicized modern artist character of Anish, who resists Mrs Swan

on topics of imperial history and articulates the superiority of Indian culture, although he says, 'England is my home now. I have spent half my life here' (18). He has married an English girl and is a modern 'deconstructive' style painter, unlike his father. Their conflicting perspectives on the British Empire surface most strongly when Anish mentions 'The first War of Independence' or 'The Rising of 1857', which Mrs Swan calls 'The Mutiny' (17).

Stoppard gives an equal voice to both these perspectives, as a heated debate on imperial history follows. In response to Mrs Swan's argument, 'We were your Romans, you know. We might have been your Normans', Anish contradicts her and convincingly puts forth his own position, 'And did you expect us to be grateful? [. . .] *We* were the Romans. We were up to date when you were a backward nation. The foreigners who invaded *you* found a third-world country!' (17–8).

Highlighting the different ways of interpreting the past, a crucial question arises concerning the notion of 'proper', when Mrs Swan refutes Anish in her subsequent counterargument, 'We made you a proper country!' (18). This concept comes up again in the words of the British army officer who tells Flora, 'In India proper, I mean *our* India, there'd be two or three Clubs. The box-wallahs would have their own and the government people would stick together, you know how it is – and the Army . . .' (52). As if responding to these views, it is Dilip, living in the post-Independent India, who presents the British influence in different terms:

> Yes, it's a disaster for us! Fifty years of Independence and we are still hypnotized! Jackets and ties must be worn! English-model public schools for the children of the elite, and the voice of Bush House is heard in the land. Gandhi would fast again, I think. Only, this time he'd die. (58–9)

Flora is a figure on the verges of the two cultures, neither a part of Indian society nor entirely absorbed in English society. A new arrival to India, she disregards English conventions ('The game is different here. By putting up at the residency you would have gained respect, not lost it') (Durance, 22), while taking advantage of her status as a member of the colonial community. In one sense Flora is a slightly detached observer of both sides of the Anglo-Indian relationship, but at the same time she is personally involved. Like the Anglo-Indian relationship itself, she is contradictory yet compassionate. In this way, she mirrors Stoppard, who prefers polyphony of ideas and voices to the rhetorical presentation of a single point of view.

One of the characters with whom Flora is involved, in addition to Das and the English officer Durance, is the Rajah of Jummapur, another contradictory voice who also represents the Anglo-Indian relationship. He owns about eighty-six European cars as 'a connoisseur of the automobile' (60) and unlike Flora, who has come to India for her health, he says, 'I go to the South of France every year, you see, for my health' (61).

The Rajah has a cautious, yet cooperative relationship with the Residency, choosing to suppress dissent by nationalists since 'Independence would be the beginning of the end for the Princely States' and would mean 'the end of unity of the Subcontinent' (61). On the other hand, he advises Flora 'to fight them the same way, you won't win by playing cricket' (62). As Das later reveals to Flora, it was not the Britsh Raj but the Rajah who was responsible for causing the Theosophical Society in Jummapur to be suspended for one year, after Mr Chamberlain, the editor of a communist weekly, lectured on the subject of Empire three years earlier. Yet the Rajah entertains Flora by 'the cavalcade of motor cars' (62) and presents the erotic watercolour, *Gita Govinda*, as a gift.

5.6 Conclusion

Indian Ink illuminates the complexity of Stoppard's juxtaposition of ideas and is the most character-driven play up to this point in his career, converging various layers of themes and plot and offering varying perspectives on the ethics of Empire. In addition to the wealth of literary hypotexts (books and poems) which provide a polyphony of perspectives on the British Empire's role in the history of India, the cultures (and artistic traditions in particular) of the two countries are used as hypotexts (or hypocultures), providing source materials which the playwright uses for comparison, contrast and emotional association.

While other plays by Stoppard present polyphony of ideas and opinions to the audience, *Indian Ink* focuses on the perceptions that form and underlie these opinions. It therefore presents a different and more complex polyphony, in which contemporary ideas and perceptions respond to and call upon parallel perceptions from the past. Such complexity is demonstrated through dualities of time, location, characters and themes. Self-referencing is also prominent in *Indian Ink*, serving to highlight the intricate web of relationships at the centre of the play. In addition to the self-referential doubling of Stoppard by Pike (and to some extent by Flora), deeper examination of the play reveals self-reference at many levels, as with Flora's poem on the topic of being painted, written by her while being painted by Das. This cyclicity masks a further self-reference, in that this fictional hypotext becomes the subject of Pike's numerous footnotes, themselves potential hypotexts for future fictional researchers.

Indian Ink is a highly crafted example of Stoppard's art, interweaving culture, art and history, and providing the audience with opportunities for reflection and enjoyment. Stoppard continues his use of hypertextuality and polyphony in this play, enlarging and extending these techniques to

include cultural hypertextuality and perceptual polyphony, enhancing the play's effectiveness and further illuminating his continuing concern with the 'human action, its motives and limitations and values' (Gruber, 1981: 296). The resulting dramatic event is multi-layered as well as multi-voiced and offers an intricate, dualistic and self-referential web of relationships which the audience can either observe as it unfolds, or investigate, in the manner of Pike and of Stoppard himself.

Chapter 6

The Coast of Utopia: 'Who's Got the Map?'

6.1 Context

Written more than a decade after the collapse of Soviet communism, *The Coast of Utopia* (2002) trilogy (hereafter *Utopia*) continues Stoppard's engagement with history and is distinguished by its portrayal of state repression in mid-nineteenth century Tsarist Russia and the rise of a new generation of radicals, whose ideas eventually led to Lenin's Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, in which Tsarist tyrannies were replaced by an equally authoritarian regime. *Utopia* offers a retrospective on a crucial period of change and in doing so forms part of what David Edgar, aware of the ironies of history and its representations, describes as 'a theatrical sea change. Since 9/11, British political theatre has been dominated by fact-based drama' with 'political as well as theatrical impact' (*Guardian*, 22 July 2010, p. 19).

The focus on breaches of human rights under the Tsars (and implied parallels in post-revolution Russia) reflects Stoppard's continued attention to matters of human rights, censorship and state repression, political freedom, freedom of speech and expression, and the role of writers and intellectuals under a restricted totalitarian state. These themes have become more explicit in his work since the late seventies, although *R&G* had already hinted at the notion of innocent people victimized by the state and *Travesties* had included an attack on political grand narratives and the subjugation of art to communist propaganda. Stoppard has shown himself to be particularly acute in his understanding of the logical outcomes of political suppression and it is

significant that *Travesties* was written seventeen years before the eventual collapse of Soviet Communism.

Critics and commentators have noted a change of direction in Stoppard's output after *Travesties* towards more socially engaged work, in particular when dealing with Soviet repression and treatment of dissident writers. David Roper and David Gollob suggested in 1981 that his work 'seems to have modulated away from the glitter of Wildean disengagement, biting into the more meaty domains of freedom of expression in Czechoslovakia and freedom of press in the embattled U.K.' (Delaney, 1994: 151). John Bull similarly noted: 'As Stoppard's work has developed away from its early insistence that style is all, and come to terms with the significance of its inherently political ideology, so his refusal to adopt a stance has become absolute [. . .] but it is most evident when Stoppard has turned away from England and to events in Eastern Europe' (1994: 204–5). This change can be seen in his play for actors and orchestra, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (1977), first performed by the RSC at the Royal Festival Hall and revived in 2009 at the National Theatre. Combining 'an aesthetic with a political concern' (Hodgson, 2001: 88), it 'showed him moving away from exuberant extravaganzas towards engagement with the world's injustice' and 'brilliantly counters Soviet iron with Stoppardian irony, and shows the terrors of living in an orchestrated society' (Billington, *Guardian*, 19 January 2009, p. 34). The play was conceived after André Previn, the conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, suggested in 1974 that Stoppard create a play which would include a real orchestra, and was further inspired by a meeting with a Russian exile in London. The play, which was dedicated to Viktor Fainberg and Vladimir Bukovsky, two Soviet dissidents expelled to the West, revolves around a political prisoner, Alexander Ivanov, who is imprisoned in a Soviet mental hospital, from which he will not be released until he agrees that his anti-government statements were

caused by a mental disorder.

Although Stoppard has often been labelled as a playwright lacking a political interest (see Chapter 3), closer examination of his plays reveals an underlying concern with moral and political issues, as in *Professional Foul*, a BAFTA award-winning television play shown on BBC TV in September 1977. Written for Amnesty International's Prisoner of Conscience Year, the play deals with Czech political history. According to Stoppard: 'A visit to the USSR (not Czechoslovakia) finally produced a ghost of a plot, and after that the play was written in two or three weeks, including turning a ballroom dancing team into the England Football squad' (1998: viii). *Professional Foul* includes among its characters a Czech dissident, Pavel Hollar, whose doctoral thesis (for which he is later arrested) asserts that 'The ethics of the state must be judged against the fundamental ethic of the individual. The human being, not the citizen. I conclude there is an obligation, a human responsibility, to fight against the state correctness. Unfortunately that is not a safe conclusion' (*Professional Foul* 145). The theme of 'the morality between individuals' (Stoppard quoted in Delaney, 1994: 164), played out between Hollar and Professor Anderson, an Oxbridge don who comes to Czechoslovakia for a conference and meets his ex-student Hollar, is central to the play, which Anthony Jenkins observes is about 'being wrenched from a self-contained world into another, less comfortable one' (1989: 137).

John Bull comments that Stoppard was aware of the non-political content of his earlier plays[69] and his subsequent focus on Eastern Europe deliberately questioned this stance, with his later plays being 'centred on the role of the playwright as mouthpiece for the ideas that the plays embrace' (1994: 198–9). However, as Stoppard's own accounts indicate, these two plays of 1977 do not represent a sudden change of ethical or political stance. In reply to Milton Shulman's

[69] Stoppard's earlier responses suggest that he is not unpolitical but political in a different way. See Chapter 3, p. 78.

question as to what had created 'such an obvious shifting of creative gears' in *Professional Foul* and *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, Stoppard asserted that:

> There was no sudden conversion on the road to Damascus [. . .] I know human rights have been around for a long time and I have always been concerned with the daily horrors that I read in the newspapers. [. . .] For some time I had been involved with Amnesty International, the worldwide human rights organization. The BBC had been asking me to write a TV play for them [. . .] Amnesty International had decided to make 1977 Prisoner of Conscience Year and I thought a play on TV might help their cause. (in Delaney, 1994: 108–9)

Further, when American critic Robert Berkvist asked in 1979 whether he saw himself as having assumed a new political stance, Stoppard warned against assuming that the plays, 'all of which concern freedom of expression in Iron Curtain countries – signal a change of direction on his part, a new seriousness of purpose' and explained:

> That's just not the way it looks from my end of the telescope at all [. . .] *Jumpers* has got the same subject as *Professional Foul*. They're both about professors of moral philosophy, but the treatment is entirely different. *Jumpers* is a farce, while *Professional Foul* is a sort of realistic look at a real situation. [. . .] For all my sense of purpose tells me now, I might write a play in which an English duchess comes through the French windows with a basket of begonias and a tennis racquet and announces that the butler is dead in the library. I'm just not sitting here thinking, "From now on, I'm such and such a kind of writer". (in Delaney, 1994: 138)[70]

As can be seen from these statements, elements of forward political thinking emerged quite early in Stoppard's work. When Roper and Gollob questioned him in 1981 about his 'shift from

[70] It is intriguing that Stoppard's reference to 'a play in which an English duchess comes through the French windows with a basket of begonias' looks forward to *Arcadia*. The ability to write in these totally different registers is part of what distinguishes Stoppard's work.

withdrawal to engagement' (Delaney, 1994: 151), Stoppard's response was that: 'The equation which I would disavow is that any serious, involved, engaged playwriting is equated by this author with naturalism – no. The plays which I've written more recently which tend to be naturalistic and also tend to engage themselves with serious immediate matters are not exhibiting a relationship between those two facts' (in Delaney, 1994: 153–4). Stoppard has further remarked that: 'in the last few years I haven't been writing about questions whose answers I believe to be ambivalent. In *Every Good Boy* and *Professional Foul*, the author's position isn't ambiguous. [. . .] I want to live in a country where [the] dispute can take place, and not where it's forbidden' (Delaney, 1994: 165). Anthony Jenkins supports Stoppard's analysis, arguing that:

> [T]he three plays which belong to that period will not support a theory of The Sudden Politicization of Tom Stoppard. The "politics" of undeniable human truths and inalienable human rights begins with *Jumpers* and continues to define the roles of Joyce and the Lenins in *Travesties*. What *is* new about Stoppard from that point on is the simplicity with which he formulates those ideas dramatically: the undeviating, obsessive line that links *Dirty Linen* and *New-Found-Land*; the tight patterns that surround the madman and the prisoner in *Every Good Boy*, whereby the farce eats like acid into the authorities' bland and pompous reasonableness; the carefully worked cause-and-effect structure that moves Anderson from "correct" to "incorrect" behavior in *Professional Foul*. What is also new, and why Stoppard appears to become more political, is that each of the plays makes a direct, unambiguous statement. For the time, he abandons his intellectual "leap-frog", or rather his leap-frogging arrives at a distinctive terminus. Here, Tom Stoppard does *know* things which before he had only suggested. (1989: 142)

Stoppard's concern with human rights issues pervades his later plays, as in the television play, *Squaring the Circle* (1984), which was a re-interpretation of the recent political and social history of Poland during the rise and fall of the Solidarity trade union federation. One of the main

threads of *Hapgood* (1988) is about Russian espionage, while *The Russia House* (1990), for which Stoppard wrote the screenplay, was a film adaptation of John Le Carré's novel of the same name (1989). More recently, *Rock'n'Roll* (2006), which addresses the collapse of the Czech Communist regime and the advent of democratic government (the 'Velvet Revolution' of 1969) exposed another irony, as Billington notes:

> Tom Stoppard, making a somewhat belated debut as a Royal Court dramatist at the age of sixty-nine, [raised] some of the largest questions of all about the state of our culture in *Rock'n'Roll*. [. . .] Bursting at the seams with ideas, Stoppard's play was also a meditation on freedom. And at the heart of it lay the idea that, while the Czechs and Slovaks had struggled painfully to achieve democracy, in England we had witnessed a gradual erosion of our own hard-won liberties. (2007: 400)

Perhaps the most crucial speech in the play comes from Lenka, towards the end:

> Don't come back, Jan. This place has lost its nerve. They put something in the water since you were here. It's a democracy of obedience. They're frightened to use their minds in case their minds tell them heresy. They apologise for history. They apologise for good manners. They apologise for difference. It's a contest of apology. You've got your country back. Why would you change it for one that's fucked for fifty years at least. (*Rock'n'Roll* 102–3)

Having placed *Utopia* in terms of Stoppard's own plays, a wider view of its historical and theatrical context requires that the trilogy be situated in the context of post-communism. The Revolutions that occurred in several Warsaw Pact countries in 1989 marked the beginning of the gradual collapse of communism in Russia and the Eastern bloc and British playwrights were quick to respond to this collapse by writing plays about political and social change in that region.

As Billington comments: 'One faith that disappeared in the Nineties was a belief in state socialism. The progressive disintegration of the USSR from 1989 to 1991 and the collapse of communism throughout Eastern Europe was obviously an historical watershed; and one that had a huge impact on left-wing intellectuals throughout the world' (2007: 327). John Bull notes how this change was reflected on stage:

> He [Stoppard] has not been alone in responding to the events in the changing Eastern European world. In 1990, Howard Brenton and Tariq Ali's *Moscow Gold* was produced [by the RSC] at the Barbican – a rapidly written piece about Russian perestroika – and David Edgar's *The Shape of the Table* was staged at the National [premiered on 8 November 1990], one year after the Berlin Wall had been demolished. Their political perspective on events is importantly different, however, and not based on the acceptance of the model of bourgeois conformity for its context. Stoppard, more than any writer of his generation, has brought the values of this world of English middle-class decencies into conflict with events in the disintegrating Russian Empire. (1994: 205)

Partly retrospective, *Moscow Gold* is a play set in the last decade (1982–1990) of the former Soviet Union, a 'faction'[71] based on the Gorbachev leadership and the attempts of reformers to change the nation's corrupt systems through the new policies of *perestroika* and of *glasnost*. As

[71] Reinelt and Hewitt describe 'faction' as '[David] Edgar's term for drama which is completely fact-based but not necessarily tied to "history as it happened"' (2011: 47). In his discussion of Edgar's *Destiny*, John Bull sums up the notion of 'faction' as 'the combination of fact and fiction', adding that: 'It is not an attempt to reproduce history as such, but involves the creation of a fictional set of characters to demonstrate the workings of the meticulously researched material. His [Edgar's] general model is a variant of the epic, with frequent changes of location, and a series of jumps through history before eventually concentrating on a brief period in contemporary England. The effect is to show the way in which a current political reality is a product both of previous history and of the particular interventions and interrelationships of individuals acting within that history. The objective history is enmeshed with subjective response' (1984: 170).

Billington points out: 'writing as events were unfolding, Ali and Brenton pinned their faith in Gorbachev as a man who had emerged from a mummified party hierarchy and who was trying "to devise a socialism that nature can handle". In the end, the authors were simply overtaken by reality. They were not to know that by Christmas 1991 Gorbachev's attempts at glasnost and perestroika would have failed because gradualist reform could not take place in a society that was dismembering itself' (2007: 328). Edgar's *The Shape of the Table* seeks to explain what happened and to relate the events to the British experience, while asking what would come next: 'Setting his play in a fictional country, with strong echoes of Czechoslovakia, he showed a communist puppet regime collapsing through a mixture of Muscovite string-pulling, its own internal power struggles and the influence of satellite TV beaming pictures of street demonstrations around the world. [. . .] Edgar's point was that all politics is a matter of compromise and that the new velvet revolutionaries would eventually be subject to the same pressures as the old communists' (Billington, 2007: 329).

Demonstrating his keen interest in Soviet politics and peace processes, Edgar's following statement in a newspaper article indicates his use of the same technique of 'faction' in his two plays about Eastern Europe:

> *The Shape of the Table* constructed a generic 1989 anti-communist revolution out of the body parts of six real ones; *The Prisoner's Dilemma* built an imaginary inter-ethnic civil war out of real conflicts in South Africa, Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia and the Middle East. By drawing on a wide variety of examples of the same thing, the faction writer is able to present not what's happening (the job of the journalist) nor what happened (the role of the historian) but what happens, in a particular process, whenever it occurs. (Edgar, *Guardian*, 22 July 2010, p. 19)

Nearly a decade earlier, Edgar had written:

> In 1990, I felt there was enough in common between events in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria to create a representative fictionalised narrative of the fall of east European communism (for my play *The Shape of the Table*). The conflicts of the 90s had much in common, too (with the minor difficulty that events are changing, dizzyingly, as we rewrite, rehearse and indeed present the play). But as well as being a suitable medium for dealing with peace processes, drama is also a metaphor and a means for the process itself. (Edgar, *Guardian*, 7 July 2001, p. 3)

From this brief overview, it can be seen that dramatists at this time (including Stoppard) tried not only to match post-communism reality in theatre but also to explain and interpret events and relate them to their own experience.[72] In terms of the way in which *Utopia* responds to previous theatrical representations of pre-revolutionary Russia, it is relevant to acknowledge Howard Barker's play, *Hated Nightfall* (1994), an imaginative speculation on the last hours of the Russian royal family, the Romanoffs, before their execution at the hand of the Bolsheviks in July 1918, including their interactions with the royal children's former tutor (Dancer) who is now in charge of overseeing the execution as an agent of the revolution,[73] and the serial television drama *Fall of Eagles* (1974) and one of its episodes in particular, *Absolute Beginners*, scripted by

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[72] A further response to the changing political situation came with Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest: A Play from Romania* (1990, Royal Court Theatre). Written for student actors in three acts and set adjacent to the popular uprising in Bucharest later known as the Romanian Revolution of December 1989, the play recounts what happened in communist Romania several months before (showcasing the Securitate surveillance, a Romanian equivalent of the KGB), during and after the Revolution.

[73] Although Dancer sees himself as 'The Doorman of our Century' and as 'the transient phenomenon, [who] will open the door to [. . .] The new anything The New itself' (*Hated Nightfall* 195, 196), he becomes compelled by his own mission in the midst of turmoil. As an exploration of history, violence and human motivation, the play foregrounds Dancer's 'exemplification of desire and subsequent martyrdom in the schoolroom at Ekaterinburg 16th July 1918' (Barker, 2009: 169).

Trevor Griffiths.[74] This sixth episode of the thirteen-part BBC series (which deals with the decline of the ruling European dynasties in Austria-Hungary, Germany and Russia from 1853 to 1918) is a dramatization of the birth of the future Russian Communist Party amongst Russian émigrés in Geneva and then London, featuring the origin of the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. As John Bull points out, in its depiction of Lenin, the play also explores the correlation between the public and the private:

> Human considerations cannot be allowed to interfere. His [Lenin's] closest associates are removed from influence if they offer opposition, whilst usefulness to the Party will excuse any personal shortcomings. [. . .] Even Lenin's wife's night-time query, 'Do you want me?', takes on ironic undertones with her later offer of secretarial assistance, 'Do you need me?' This harsh view of the revolutionary programme forms a continual part of the dialectic in all his [Griffiths'] plays. (1984: 130)

As with the portrayals of Lenin in *Travesties* and in *Absolute Beginners*, the pre-revolutionary idealists in *Utopia* (particularly in *Salvage*) were equally assured that communist revolution was the only way to modernise their backward country and liberate its people. However, the idealists did not live to see the reality of its outcome. What links Stoppard to Griffiths here is that both use a play as an arena for the open-ended discussion of ideas, with the 'capacity for shifting perspective' and foregrounding 'the dialectical relationship between the objective event and its subjective apprehension' (Bull, 1984: 139–40). Furthermore, as evident in *Absolute Beginners*, Griffiths is committed to a tradition in that he 'has relied on variants of the naturalistic format as the most accessible and economic way of opening up the discussion that is

[74] For more discussion on Stoppard and Griffiths, see Chapter 3, pp. 70–1.

at the centre of all his plays' (Bull, 1984: 121) – a characteristic shared by Stoppard.[75]

From the preceding review, it can be seen that *Utopia* has a place not only in the context of dramas about post-communism (when the ends that were to justify the brutal means had proved to be false hopes), but also as a pre-cursor to the pre-revolution scene described by Griffiths, explaining and deriving the moods of sincere idealism and social reform that fell foul of fractions and were frustrated in a different type of autocracy.

6.2 Overview

> A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias. (Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', 1994: 1089)

One of the trends of contemporary British theatre is a 'return to history', which Michael Billington calls 'a rediscovery in the theatre of the excitement of *fact*' (quoted in Edemariam, *Guardian*, 31 May 2008, p. 14).[76] Stoppard has been at the vanguard of this trend, with his historical investigations and retelling of the past in *Travesties*, *Indian Ink* and *The Invention of Love*, and with his analysis of historicity in *Arcadia*, which 'deconstructs the idea of history'

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[75] Another television play which shares the feeling of the plays dealing with the Eastern Europe is Mikhail Bulgakov's *Moliere* (1926), which links to Stoppard's writings about the repression of the artist or of individual freedom. Bulgakov, when suffering under Stalin, wrote his play about Moliere suffering under Louis XIV. When it was performed on BBC television in 1984, it began with Bulgakov taking a phone call from Stalin and then moved to the play itself.

[76] Edemariam (writing on Michael Frayn) quotes Billington's statement 'with reference to Howard Brenton's *Never So Good* [2008], about Harold Macmillan, Tony Harrison's *Fram* [2008] and Tom Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia*'.

(Palmer, 1998: 176). The Dan David Prize[77] (2008) duly recognised him as a playwright 'whose plays return repeatedly to the past as part of his ceaseless search for meaning in a bewildering universe' honouring him in the field of 'creative rendering of the past'. *Utopia*, described in the Prize citation as having 'examined the roots of political radicalism in nineteenth century Russia', also demonstrates 'the fertilizing powers of hypertextual operations and the inexhaustibility of literature' (Genette, 1997: xi). Although the title of the trilogy evokes Wilde's statement (above), Stoppard rejects Wilde's optimism, taking his protagonists instead on an allegorical *Voyage* that is *Shipwreck*(ed) 'on the rocks of egoism and extremism' (Innes, 2006: 231). Some remnants of self-respect and ideological persuasion are *Salvage*(d) by the end of the trilogy, but the Utopia of socialism remains an unattainable dream for the dying Herzen, who has endured political and personal humiliation throughout his life, only to be finally ignored by the radical 'new men' of Russia.

Utopia had its world premiere at the National Theatre's Olivier auditorium in London in 2002, directed by Trevor Nunn, and received general acclaim from the critics: 'nothing of such intellectual ambition, such daring or epic scope has marked the National Theatre's 38-year history as this brain-storming trilogy of plays' (de Jongh, *Evening Standard*, 5 August 2002, p. 9). Also recognised for its Stoppardian humour, it was applauded as 'intelligent, lucid, eloquent and enlivened by the author's wit and eye for the absurd [which] gives voice to a philosophy of moderation dear to Stoppard's heart' (Taylor, *Independent*, 8 August 2002, p. 6). Trevor Nunn's production was praised for responding to the particular nature of the text and providing a setting

[77] The Dan David Prize is an international award from Tel Aviv University, which presents three annual prizes for outstanding cultural, social, scientific or technological achievements, within the three dimensions of time – past, present and future.

which could deal with the different layers of the trilogy, making the actors mobile 'by using the revolving stage at the Olivier' (Hornby, 2003: 636) and giving overall 'a sense of scope, movement, and historic significance'. The set designer, William Dudley, was also commended for his fluid use of 'ground-breaking 3-D video projection to cast moving images across the stage' (Reynolds, *Daily Telegraph*, 3 August 2002).

After revision, the entire trilogy was first performed in America at the Vivian Beaumont Theatre at Lincoln Centre in New York in 2006/2007 for a combined total of 124 performances, directed by Jack O'Brien, and won a previously unparalleled seven Tony awards, including that for Best Play. Both in London and New York, the three plays could be seen separately at individual performances, or at all-day Saturday marathons, with a combined running time of nine hours. This provided an opportunity for the audience to experience the interweaving and development of ideas and personalities that occurs within and between the three plays, though the contrasting content of each one makes it unlikely that viewers of individual plays were able to appreciate the full significance of the various themes and events. In October 2007 *Utopia* transferred to Russia and was performed in Russian at the Russian Academic Youth Theatre in Moscow (directed by Alexey Borodin), where it received extremely favourable reviews. As with the Czech performance of *Rock'n'Roll* in Prague in 2007, this staging of *Utopia* to a 'home audience' carried added meaning for Russian audiences, many of whom were familiar with the hypotexts. The Japanese premiere occurred in 2009 at Theater Cocoon, Bunkamura in Tokyo, directed by Yukio Ninagawa.

Described by Stoppard as three sequential yet self-contained plays 'about people searching for the ideal society' (Hunter, 2005: 166), the trilogy comprises *Voyage* (which takes place between 1833 and 1844 in Russia), *Shipwreck* (1846 to 1852 in Russia, Germany and France),

and *Salvage* (1853 to 1868 in England and Switzerland). In six acts and sixty-eight scenes, *Utopia* spans thirty-five years and travels across nineteenth-century Europe, as it traces the complicated story of four Russian writers and friends, radical social theorists and idealists, and members of the intelligentsia, 'a uniquely Russian phenomenon, the intellectual opposition considered as a social class' (*Shipwreck* 138).[78] The trilogy functions on one level as 'a dramatic biography' (Wohl, 2003: 348), showing the conflict between the idealistic visions of mid-nineteenth-century Russian political thinkers and revolutionary writers and the turbulent reality of personal and national restrictions under the Tzarist autocracy. On another level it is a panoramic re-telling of the main characters' fervent youth in Russia and their exile in Europe, emerging as a drama of family and human relationships. Among the four principal characters, the aristocratic, revolutionary anarchist Michael Bakunin and the brilliant but erratic, visionary literary critic Vissarion Belinsky form two opposing poles in the first play. Alexander Herzen, a nobleman's son, and the first self-proclaimed socialist in Russian history, is also introduced in *Voyage*, and his personal and public experiences provide the setting for the next two plays, *Shipwreck* and *Salvage*. While Herzen offers a middle-of-the-road perspective, in contrast to the extremism of other characters, the novelist and playwright Ivan Turgenev, author of *Fathers and Children* (1862),[79] represents the voice of literary detachment in the trilogy and appears in all three plays, together with Herzen and Bakunin.

On a third level, *Utopia* is also a commentary on the artist's creative process and on writing in particular, a thread that appears in many of Stoppard's major plays. In *Jumpers*, the main

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[78] Quotations and page numbers are from the compendium volume of *The Coast of Utopia: Voyage* (1–117), *Shipwreck* (119–221), *Salvage* (223–336), published in 2008.

[79] Also known as *Fathers and Sons*. In *Salvage*, Stoppard creates a comically fictional scene, in which Turgenev meets the model for his nihilist character, Bazarov, who appears in this novel.

character, George, is writing his philosophy lectures; in *Travesties*, Joyce, Tzara and Lenin produce literary works and artistic manifestos; in *The Real Thing* the playwright, Henry, rewrites a play written by a young protégé of his wife; in *Arcadia* we see Bernard writing his paper on Byron; *The Invention of Love* is devoted to a description of Houseman as a poet and Latin scholar; and in *Indian Ink*, Flora writes her poetry and her letters and the researcher, Pike, is in the process of writing his biography of Flora. *Utopia* continues this thread, as Stoppard shows Herzen writing his memoirs, his letters, and *From the Other Shore* (1854), a collection of essays referred to by Herzen as 'a book I wrote in the year of revolution, six years ago now' (*Salvage* 257). Belinsky is also shown writing his articles and his famous letter to Gogol[80] and Turgenev refers to the writing of *A Sportsman's Sketches* (*Voyage* 53), *A Month in the Country* (*Shipwreck* 195), and *Fathers and Children* (*Salvage* 308, 314–5). In this way (as in the other plays), Stoppard shows the process of creation of his hypotexts, in similar manner to Escher's *Drawing Hands* (see Chapter 3, Figure 6, p. 95) in which 'two hands are in the process of drawing one another into existence' (Garber, 2008: xxxv). As Stoppard's hypertext emerges from the hypotext, the readers/audience members also observe that hypotext in creation, in a constantly recurring, self-reflexive loop. Rather than simply borrowing from the hypotext, Stoppard explores the circumstances of its creation, and by writing about the moment of creation, he gives us some sense of that process. Stoppard's pen is here writing his source into existence.

The trilogy draws its sources from influential texts on Russian social history, thought and

[80] Gogol was praised by Belinsky for works such as *The Inspector General* and *Dead Souls*, but held very conservative personal views, as expressed in his *Selected Excerpts from Correspondence with Friends*. Belinsky's published review caused Gogol to complain and Belinsky wrote a letter (1847) in reply. This letter circulated in hundreds of copies and became one of the fundamental texts of Russian radicalism.

literature, including *Russian Thinkers*,[81] a collection of essays written by Isaiah Berlin and *The Romantic Exiles: A Nineteenth-century Portrait Gallery*[82] by the British scholar, E. H. Carr. Stoppard's notes (a five-page introduction supplied with the compendium volume of *Utopia*) credit these two authors: 'Isaiah Berlin is *The Coast of Utopia*'s presiding spirit, but it was E. H. Carr's *The Romantic Exiles*, and his biography of Bakunin, which inspired the alarming expansion' (2008a: x). The notes go on to explain that the seed of the trilogy was an episode in the career of Belinsky who, instead of living and writing freely in Paris, chose to return to a Russia of punitive censorship where 'the public looked to writers as their leaders' (2008a: ix). Stoppard was drawn by this paradoxical idea that 'artists working in a totalitarian dictatorship or tsarist autocracy are secretly and slightly shamefully envied by artists who work in freedom. They have the gratification of intense interest: the authorities want to put them in jail, while there are younger readers for whom what they write is pure oxygen' (quoted in Jaggi, *Guardian*, 6 September 2008). This reminded Stoppard of his own experience regarding the 'heightened status of literature and art' when Prague was under similarly repressive conditions:

> In 1977 in Prague during the 'normalisation' years of President Husak, I had spent some time with banned Czech writers, and had been made aware of the same irony, that under censorship words which squeezed past the censor, often in samizdat, were valued and read with an attention rarely accorded to anything published in the West. And when I returned to Prague after the fall of the Communists, I found that among the 'freed' writers and artists there was a certain nostalgia for that heightened status of literature and art. (Stoppard, 2008a: ix)

In *Russian Thinkers*, Berlin states that during 'a remarkable decade' (1838 to 1848), a group

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[81] *Russian Thinkers* was first published in 1978. References in this thesis are to the edition published in 2008.

[82] *The Romantic Exiles* was first published in 1933. References in this thesis are to the reprinted edition of 1968.

of young radicals, 'the original founders of the Russian intelligentsia [. . .] set the moral tone for the kind of talk and action which continued throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, until the final climax in 1917' (2008: 131). Berlin presents a series of portraits of the most outstanding members of the intelligentsia – Bakunin, Belinsky, Herzen and Turgenev – whose lives and writings are transformed and recreated in Stoppard's dialogues, providing the trilogy's dramatic outline. Stoppard follows Berlin in showing these lives as, to use Aileen Kelly's words, 'continually torn between their suspicion of absolutes and their longing to discover some monolithic truth that would once and for all resolve the problems of moral conduct' (Berlin, 2008: xxviii) and shares Berlin's sympathy with Herzen, who emerges as the hero of *Russian Thinkers*.

Carr's *The Romantic Exiles* is a vivid historical discourse centred on Herzen, his family and their companions in Europe. It also quotes from stories recounted in detail by Herzen in his own memoirs, *My Past and Thoughts*,[83] as well as documents, letters and papers provided by the surviving members of the families involved, supplemented by the many conversations Carr had with them (Carr, 1968: 9). In the style of the author as narrator and commentator, 'from time to time' giving his 'own interpretations of the situations and events described' (Carr, 1968: 10), *The Romantic Exiles* follows the passionate stories and conflicts of Herzen's family and acquaintances from 1847 in Russia to his last years in European exile. *Michael Bakunin* (1937),

[83] Berlin describes *My Past and Thoughts* as 'Herzen's greatest title to immortality' which 'conveys the tension between individuals and classes, personalities and opinions both in Russia and in the West, with marvellous vividness and precision' (2008: 238) and suggests that 'it is as a writer that he [Herzen] survives. His autobiography is one of the great monuments to Russian literary and psychological genius, worthy to stand beside the great novels of Turgenev and Tolstoy. Like *War and Peace*, like *Fathers and Children*, it is wonderfully readable, and, save in inferior translation, not dated, not Victorian, still astonishingly contemporary in feeling' (2008: 239).

Carr's biography of Bakunin, also describes the misadventures of Bakunin's sisters, which Stoppard brings into the trilogy, particularly in *Voyage*.

Chekhov's influence on the trilogy has often been identified (Nadel, 2004: 505; Neufeld, 2007: 412) and dramatic similarities are crucial to the trilogy's polyphonic re-presentation of the Russian idealists' lives and thoughts. During a BBC Radio Three interview in 2002, Stoppard reflected on 'a big change' that happened to him as a result of watching a Chekhov play and then a Gorky play:

> I came to be sitting in the theatre watching *The Cherry Orchard*, feeling the sense of instant diminution; I mean as one sort of diminishes on one's chair one thinks: 'Yes, I see, it's really about human beings, isn't it? It's not really language at all.' I saw a Gorky play in the Olivier theatre, Trevor Nunn's production of *Summer Folk*, and it was seeing that play which as much as anything else made me determined, after many years of being determined, to try to write [. . .] a Russian play. (Tusa, 2002)

Stoppard wrote his own version of *The Cherry Orchard* in 2009 following his 1997 adaptation of Chekhov's *The Seagull* and his adaptation of *Ivanov*, which was performed at Wyndham's Theatre in London in 2008 and at the Viaduct Theater, Chicago, in 2009. *Utopia* stemmed from Stoppard's 'very abstract desire to write a play in the manner of Chekhov' (quoted in Cavendish, *Daily Telegraph*, 29 June 2002, p. 1), since he had long admired the work of Chekhov and in particular how 'the micro-narrative' of the plays engage the audience, allowing 'the macro-narrative' to operate (quoted in Ostrovsky, *Financial Times Magazine*, 6 September 2003, p. 36). It is precisely 'this double action', as Ira Nadel suggests, that Stoppard sought in *Utopia*, 'opening with a family drama at the Bakunin estate, overlaid by the larger issues of political philosophy, ideology, and possible revolution. The tension of love on a personal level

parallels the tension of love of country on a national level' (2004: 503). A reading of *Russian Thinkers* enhanced his passion for a Chekhovian style of domestic drama and Stoppard was inspired to write a play about the literary critic, Belinsky. In an article entitled 'The Forgotten Revolutionary' published in the *Observer*, Stoppard writes:

> I wanted to write about him [Belinsky] because when he visited Paris he couldn't bear the rowdy free-for-all of the uncensored literary scene; he wanted to get back to the punitive restrictions in Russia where, as a consequence of censorship, 'people look to writers as their real leaders'. That was arresting. (2 June 2002, p. 5)

This original idea was modified as more historical figures (Bakunin, Turgenev and Herzen) entered the frame and the resulting trilogy expanded into complex relationships and feelings between people who aspired to change the course of Russian history:

> Bakunin, Turgenev and other equally interesting figures entered the picture. Most interesting of all was Alexander Herzen. A year or so later I confessed to Trevor Nunn, who was to direct the play at the Royal National Theatre, 'I'm writing three plays called *Bakunin*, *Belinsky* and *Herzen* . . . I think.' [. . .] In the event, *Voyage*, the first play of *The Coast of Utopia*, is centred on Bakunin and his family; Belinsky appears in *Voyage* and *Shipwreck*: and Herzen becomes the main character of *Shipwreck* and *Salvage*. Herzen, Bakunin and Turgenev appear in all three plays. (Stoppard, 2008a: x)

Ultimately, it is Herzen who becomes the focus of the trilogy and who shares Stoppard's idea that one shouldn't sacrifice the present to the future: 'What he says in the play which [. . .] I do feel in my own heart is [. . .] that if we can't arrange our own happiness it's a conceit beyond vulgarity to arrange the happiness of those who come after us' (Tusa, 2002). While pursuing a

bittersweet Chekhovian model, Stoppard's initial conception gradually evolved into a trilogy involving more than seventy characters and roaming from the Bakunin country estate (Premukhino) to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Paris, Nice, London and Switzerland. This chapter explores the textual modification and dramatic interpretation of a historical narrative (the hypotext), which is achieved through re-presentation of counterpointing voices and expression of ideas articulated in the polyphony of debates.

6.3 Hypertextuality: transposition from the narrative to the dramatic

6.3.1 Intermodal transposition

Genette defines '*transmodalization*' as 'any kind of alteration in the mode of presentation characterizing the hypotext' or 'the mode of presentation of a work of fiction, which can be *narrative* or *dramatic*', and refers to two kinds of modal transformations: '*intermodal* (involving a shift form one mode to another) and *intramodal* (involving changes within the internal functioning of the mode)' (1997: 277). In this context, '[s]erious transformation, or *transposition*' (Genette, 1997: 212) in *Utopia* occurs through alteration of the mode of presentation of the hypotext from telling to showing, giving the historical figures new life in a different time and space, and encouraging readers and viewers to participate in the sweep of history unfolding before them, while reflecting on the past and the present. Stoppard bases his dramatic portrayal of this first generation of Russian intelligentsia on multiple narrative texts, presenting episodic, cyclical and panoramic re-telling of their personal and intellectual voyages. By means of an intermodal 'shift from the narrative to the dramatic, or *dramatization*' (Genette, 1997: 277), Stoppard presents the audience/reader with a re-working of an important part of Russian history,

transformed and modified through a wide range of scenes and characters and with quotations from (and around) the narrative source texts, in an 'historical costume drama' in which the original facts have been lightly rearranged 'to better dramatic effect' (Campbell, 2007: 214, 213).

Genette describes the 'essence of dramatic transposition, which presents the same play with a new cast, a new production, new settings, sometimes new stage music (the French call it a *reprise*). We are looking here at the very life of the theatre and we know to what length modern producers are prepared to go in taking advantage of that resource' (1997: 285). Zuber-Skernitt also refers to 'processes of transposing or transferring the dramatic (original or translated) on to the stage. This dramatic transposition is a specialized form of translation unique to drama and different from translating poetry or narrative prose' (1984: 1). Both these definitions describe the transposition from the written text to the actual performance of a play. Viewed at a different level, however, Stoppard's transposition of history in *Utopia* can be seen as a 'new production' of previous events that happened on the stage of life ('the same play'). The intermodal transposition in the trilogy is a dramatisation of historical events which have been transcribed, collected and finally presented in the factual hypotexts. This allows the playwright to bring the historical figures closer to the viewers, while recreating their political and personal struggles to suggest a parallel to the contemporary world. Stoppard calls up the forgotten revolutionaries in *Utopia*, using what Julie Sanders describes as a 'mode of appropriation that uses as its raw material not literary or artistic matter but the "real" matter of facts, of historical events and personalities' (2006: 138).

Rather than simply adapting and re-presenting the original historical accounts onstage, Stoppard achieves his dramatic efficacy by selecting and re-arranging particular events from his narrative sources, showing the enthusiasms and ignorance of youth in the first play, the setbacks

and discouragements of middle age in the second play, and finally the compromises and wise moderation of old age in the last play (Mullin, 2004: 4). Constructing his trilogy around a series of episodes, he makes the points that History has no script, as Herzen states (*Salvage* 335), and that philosophical debate is but a single thread in the whole fabric of domestic life. In contrast to his characters, Stoppard sees philosophical concepts as an integral part of life, though his trilogy also raises crucial philosophical questions regarding life and death, love and relationships. By foregrounding and updating the political and personal lives of Russian idealists, *Utopia* invites the viewers/readers to reflect on the uncertainty and unpredictability of life, the subjectivity of perception, the relativity of truth, the relationship between individual freedom and the well-being of society, and the relationships between past, present and future.

6.3.2 Characters, places and events from source texts

Stoppard's work, as a result of *bricolage*, 'shows how literary discourse plays with other discourses, how it uses them in surprising fashion, how it reads them in unforeseen ways' (Genette, 1997: x). This is particularly relevant to the *Utopia* trilogy, in which the characters, scenes and events dramatically retell and reinterpret reported events, written communications and narratives from the literary sources, some of which (*The Romantic Exiles, Russian Thinkers*) are in turn retelling reported incidents from other source works (for example, Herzen's memoirs).

As with *R&G*, *Travesties*, *Arcadia* and *Indian Ink*, the contrast of differing (and sometimes paradoxical) perspectives voiced by the characters in *Utopia* is highlighted by the use of key images or verbal pictures, around which the trilogy is shaped. For example, the anarchist Bakunin's motto that 'destruction is a creative passion' (*Shipwreck* 218) is reminiscent of Tzara's act of smashing crockery to pieces in *Travesties* 'to reconcile the shame and the necessity of

being an artist!' (62). In contrast, the critic Belinsky's passionate belief is that 'literature alone can, even now, redeem our honour' and 'literature can replace, can actually become . . . Russia!' (*Voyage* 86). Herzen asserts that 'History has no purpose! History knocks at a thousand gates at every moment, and the keeper is Chance. It takes wit and courage to make our way while our way is making us' (*Salvage* 335). Turgenev claims that 'I'm not pure spirit, but I'm not society's keeper either' (*Shipwreck* 145). His approach is not to 'take sides between the fathers and the children' but to 'take every possible side' (*Salvage* 315–6). Using such key images as guides and reference points, *Utopia* juxtaposes differing interpretations of reality in each play, evoking Plato's allegory of the cave (see section 6.5, p. 246).

Voyage primarily centres on the young Michael Bakunin and his family, with the critic Belinsky as his dramatic foil, and takes Berlin's *Russian Thinkers* and Carr's *Bakunin* as its hypotexts, interweaving incidents from the sections on 'The Birth of the Russian Intelligentsia' and 'Vissarion Belinsky' (Parts I and III of Berlin's 'A Remarkable Decade' chapter) with others from Carr's biography of Bakunin, enhancing the original narrative through vivid onstage dramatisation of the lives and actions of these two main characters. A major theme running through the trilogy soon emerges in this revisiting of historical personalities as Stoppard depicts the constant oscillations and confusions between different philosophical theories of German idealism which Bakunin espouses during the play, reinforcing and confirming Berlin's description of him as someone who 'for all his marvellous eloquence, his lucid, clever, vigorous, at times devastating, critical power, seldom says anything which is precise, or profound, or authentic – in any sense personally "lived through"' (2008: 94).

Stoppard's dramatisation of Bakunin presents the same self-centred figure, whose life seems courageous yet careless, ruled by emotional storms and by perceptive analyses. In *Voyage*,

situated at the centre of an aristocratic family, Bakunin spends his time theorizing about the Self and the inner life, getting his ideas from the young philosopher Stankevich, while disregarding 'his duty to look after his estate' (50). Repeatedly borrowing money from his close friends, including the poor Belinsky, he promises, 'it's the last thing I'll ever ask of you' (90). His continual failure to keep this promise becomes a running joke throughout the trilogy, just as his constant assertion that he can 'explain it all to Father' only succeeds in upsetting the latter. By adding such recurring jokes as a dramatic device, Stoppard highlights the comedy implicit in the philosophical limitations and self-contradictions of the character of Bakunin, as commented upon by Berlin in the source text, and foregrounds his lack of faith and his vigour. Thus, when Bakunin abandons the Artillery school because idealism was 'a closed book in the army' (*Voyage* 76), he enthuses about the ideas of Schelling:

> Dawn has broken! In Germany the sun is already high in the sky! It's only us in poor behind-the-times Russia who are the last to learn about the great discovery of the age! The life of the Spirit is the only real life: our material existence stands between us and our transcendence to the Universal Idea where we become one with the Absolute! (*Voyage* 13)

However, on hearing about Kant from Stankevich, he suddenly avows that: 'Kant is the man. Now I know where I was going wrong!' (78). In like manner, Bakunin continues to contradict himself during the trilogy, always justifying his changes by claiming: 'Now I know where I was going wrong'.

> I got led astray by Schelling. He tried to make the Self just another part of the world – but now *Fichte* shows that the world doesn't exist except where I meet it – there is nothing but Self. Now I know where I was going wrong. (*Voyage* 32)

When he tries to persuade his father to let him study in Germany for a professorship, Bakunin's justification again is that:

> I was on the wrong track with Fichte, I admit it – Fichte was trying to get rid of objective reality, but Hegel shows that reality can't be ignored, you see, Father. Now I know where I was going wrong. (*Voyage* 50)

Stoppard uses this leitmotif as a dramatic tool in the trilogy, adding interest for the audience members, while providing a reference point to which they can refer other developments in the complex plot. By the end of the trilogy, when the now aged Bakunin contradicts himself once more and repeats one of the running jokes, the audience are able to anticipate his words:

> BAKUNIN: To be answerable to authority is demeaning to man's spiritual essence. All discipline is vicious. Our first task will be to destroy authority. There is no second task.
> HERZEN: But your – *our* – enemies in Marx's International number tens of thousands.
> BAKUNIN: This is where my Secret Alliance comes in – a dedicated group of revolutionaries under iron discipline, answerable to my absolute authority –
> HERZEN: Hold on . . .
> BAKUNIN: Marx's day is gone. Everything's coming together but for a few tiresome necessities. This is the last thing I'll ever ask of you –. (*Salvage* 332)

Bakunin's indecisiveness, coupled with his vain attempts to enlighten himself and his sisters through philosophical theories, is described in Carr's *Bakunin* and Berlin's *Russian Thinkers* and is dramatised by Stoppard on the stage through selective use of significant scenes from the source texts, along with vivid imagery, conjured up through descriptions such as 'a spoiled child

smashing his breakfast egg to annoy their nurse' (*Voyage* 51). In sharp juxtaposition, Stoppard presents the poor, impassioned Belinsky, who suffers most, both internally and externally, because of the gulf between his idealistic vision and harsh reality (Zimmerman, 2007: 84). Berlin describes Belinsky as one of the characteristic figures of the Russian social novel:

> the perplexed idealist, the touchingly naive, overenthusiastic, pure-hearted man, the victim of misfortunes which could be averted but in fact never are. Sometimes comical, sometimes tragical, often confused, blundering and inefficient, he is incapable of any falseness, or, at least, of irremediable falseness, and self-pitying, like Chekhov's heroes – sometimes strong and furious like Bazarov in *Fathers and Children* – he never loses an inner dignity and an indestructible moral personality. (2008: 172)

In *Utopia*, Belinsky is dramatised by Stoppard as fervid and passionate, despite his weak health and bad cough, sometimes shy and fidgety due to his lack of social ease, but someone who becomes instantly transformed when he advocates Russian art and literature. Particularly in *Voyage*, Belinsky provides a counterweight to Bakunin and his sisters. He works hard for a meagre living, and as he does so he raises profound questions about art, especially literature, and its role in national development. Whereas Bakunin and his circle represent the world of dreamy, sterile philosophizing, Belinsky here stands for the world of work (Zimmerman, 2007: 81).

Using Berlin's book as his source, Stoppard made a number of changes in his stage transposition. Belinksy appears in the first act of *Voyage* as a weak, twenty-five-year-old critic, who arrives at Premukhino in his shabby clothes, panics at a barking dog, apologizes for his late arrival, falls over his valise, blindly sits on a lap, jumps up, knocks over a bottle, stumbles to the inner door and escapes. This blundering Belinsky then makes a mesmerizing speech to the Bakunin family in defence of literary criticism and lamenting the lack of true literature in Russia:

> But as a nation we have no literature because what we have isn't ours, it's like a party where everyone has to come dressed up as somebody else – Byron, Voltaire, Goethe, Schiller, Shakespeare and the rest [. . .] The meaning of art lies in the answer to that question. To discover it, to understand it, to know the difference between it happening and not happening, this is my whole purpose of life, and it is not a contemptible calling in our own country where our liberties cannot be discussed because we have none, and science or politics can't be discussed for the same reason. A critic does double duty here. If something true can be understood about art, something will be understood about liberty, too, and science and politics and history – because everything in the universe is unfolding together. (*Voyage* 43)

At the performance recorded by the National Theatre's archival video (2002) of the production, Stoppard's dramatisation of the brilliant yet socially clumsy character received one of the biggest recorded spontaneous bursts of applause at the moment when Belinsky declares:

> We will have our literature. What kind of literature and what kind of life is the same question. Our external life is an insult. But we have produced Pushkin and now Gogol. Excuse me, I don't feel well.
>
> *This time he goes into the house.* (*Voyage* 44–5)

To Berlin, as to Stoppard, Belinsky was 'an arresting figure in the history of Russian social thought' (2008: 173). He was 'the 'conscience' of the Russian intelligentsia, the inspired and fearless publicist . . . the writer who almost alone in Russia had the character and the eloquence to proclaim clearly and harshly what many felt, but either could not or would not openly declare' (Berlin, 2008: 171). This public eloquence is comically mirrored by Stoppard's creation of a scene which reveals Belinsky's personal courage in criticizing young Bakunin's unrealistic attitude to life. Provoked by Michael, who calls the journal, the *Moscow Observer*, 'a mistake'

and tells him to abandon it, his arguments crescendo to a climax:

> BELINSKY: I've always admired your qualities, your undoubted qualities . . . your energy, optimism [. . .] Never have you shown more of the love in you, the gaiety, the poetry. That's how I want to remember you.
>
> MICHAEL: Thank you, Vissarion.
>
> BELINSKY: I don't want to remember you for your overbearing vanity, your selfishness, your lack of scruple . . . your bullying, your cadging, your conceit as teacher and guide to your distracted sisters whose only philosophy is 'Michael says' –
>
> MICHAEL: Well!
>
> BELINSKY: – and above all your permanent flight into abstraction and fantasy which allows you not to notice that the life of the philosopher is an aristocratic affair made possible by the sweat of Premukhino's five hundred souls who somehow haven't managed to attain oneness with the Absolute. [. . .] But reality can't be thought away – what's real is rational, and what's rational is real. (*Voya*ge 105–6)

Figure 11. Voyage (2002) Will Keen as Vissarion Belinsky and Douglas Henshall as Michael Bakunin (photographer Ivan Kyncl). (By permission of the National Theatre Archive.)

Herzen, characterised by Berlin as 'an entrancing talker' and 'a journalist of genius' who throughout his life 'was passionately anxious to do something memorable for himself and his country' (2008: 215), appears only twice in *Voyage*, though he dominates the following two plays. In *Shipwreck*, Herzen takes over the central role and the action revolves around his turbulent years of exile, from 1847 to 1852. Act 1 focuses on the events before, during and immediately after the abortive 1848 European uprising, mirrored in the second act by the episodes before, during and after Herzen's own domestic tragedies. Stoppard's portrayal of Herzen's emotional journey describes an emerging wisdom acquired while enduring these hardships, leading to his conviction that there is no ultimate solution to life's cruel dilemmas on either a personal or a public level. *Salvage* continues to foreground Herzen's political engagement as a Russian exile in London, juxtaposing his domestic conflicts, which are aggravated by the arrival of Nicholas Ogarev (Herzen's life-long friend) and his wife Natasha from Russia. The action takes place in London, before moving on to Geneva, where Herzen spends his last years.

Carr's depiction of the lives of the Herzen family in the first four chapters of *The Romantic Exiles* is integrated into the plot of *Shipwreck*. The story of the young Herzen's marriage to his first cousin, Natalie and their increasing disillusionment in Russia, leading them to seek a new life in Paris, derives from Carr's first chapter, 'The Departure'. Herzen's political disillusionment as a result of the failure of the 1848 Paris revolution is taken from the second chapter, 'The Promised Land'. 'A Family Tragedy: I' and 'A Family Tragedy: II' narrate in detail the two 'staggering blows of an intimate domestic tragedy' (Carr, 1968: 42). Herzen's feeling of betrayal after the revelation of his wife's affair with his acquaintance, the German poet George Herwegh, constitutes the first domestic tragedy, while the second centres on his sorrow at the death of his

son Kolya (and Herzen's mother) and the subsequent death of his wife, Natalie. These episodes are vividly re-presented by Stoppard in *Shipwreck* and bring the dramatisation to an emotional climax, as he explores differing perceptions of love and the resulting conflicts in relationships.

Figure 12. Shipwreck (2002) Eve Best as Natalie Herzen (photographer Ivan Kyncl). (By permission of the National Theatre Archive.)

As in *Shipwreck*, Stoppard transforms several chapters in *The Romantic Exiles* from the narrative to the dramatic mode in *Salvage*. This serious transformation depicts:

1. Herzen's arrival in England in 1852 (from Carr's chapter 'First Years in London');
2. the story of Ogarev and their renewed relationship in London (from 'Poor Nick: I');
3. Herzen's fatalistic involvement with Ogarev's confused and hysterical wife Natalie (Na-

tasha Tuchkov), a 'parallel between his own position now and that of George Herwegh six years before' (Carr, 1968: 171), (from 'The Recurrent Triangle');

4. the founding of *The Bell* newspaper as 'a unique episode' (Carr, 1968: 179) in Herzen's life (from 'The Great Quinquennium');
5. the rift and 'clash of temperaments and opinions' between Bakunin and Herzen in the autumn of 1861 (from 'Bakunin; or the Slippery Path');
6. Herzen's departure for Switzerland in 1865, the collapse of *The Bell*, and the summer of 1868 when 'feeling that perhaps that it was for the last time', Herzen 'gathered around him all the scattered members of his fold' (Carr, 1968: 234) (from 'Herzen's Last Years').

Using materials from the 'Fathers and Children' (299–352) chapter of *Russian Thinkers*, *Utopia* also shows the development of Turgenev, from the unknown writer who first appears in *Voyage* as '*twenty-three and well over six feet tall, with a surprisingly light, high voice*' (53) to 'a famous writer' (294) in *Salvage*. As with the use of running jokes to create comedy around Bakunin, Stoppard uses recurring images in the creation of Turgenev. These include a caricature of Karl Marx and the motif of Pushkin (comparing different types of writings and vindicating the value of literature) and his death in a duel (symbolic of the status of Russian literature). In his first appearance in *Voyage* as a writer, 'I'd still like to write a decent poem one day. Tomorrow, for example', Turgenev describes his encounter with Pushkin, who 'was a demigod' to him (53). Part of his account, 'I'm afraid I stared at him and he caught me and walked off looking vexed. I'm flattering myself. It was just a few days before the duel', becomes enacted in a brief 'Inter-Scene – January 1837' in Act 2, leading to '*the sound of an other-worldly distant pistol shot*' (100). While this brief appearance and disappearance of Pushkin is still in the mind of the

audience, Stoppard creates humour in pathos through cross-talk and confusion between the deaths of Pushkin and Hamlet, both in a duel:

> STANKEVICH: The first thing we have to do is stop being Hamlets.
>
> BELINSKY: (*reading from his stomach*) '. . . The death of the greatest poet who ever lived . . .' God, how I hate journalists. What's it got to do with them? – The loss is personal, I refuse to share it.
>
> STANKEVICH: She was the wrong woman for him. The duel was his divided self – dramatised as a fencing match.
>
> BELINSKY: He was shot.
>
> STANKEVICH: What?
>
> BELINSKY: He was shot.
>
> STANKEVICH: Who was?
>
> BELINSKY: Pushkin.
>
> STANKEVICH: I'm talking about Hamlet.
>
> BELINSKY: Hamlet?
>
> STANKEVICH: There was a duel. Do you remember the duel? (*Voyage* 100–1)

6.3.3 Further dramatic devices

6.3.3.1 Letters and Images

Stoppard's textual modification in *Utopia* characteristically includes the transformation and enactment of written correspondences quoted in the source text. This tool was effectively used in his earlier plays, as in the enactment in *R&G* of Hamlet's letter to Horatio in Act 5 of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and the imaginative dramatisation of Flora's letters to link the two time schemes of past and present in *Indian Ink*. This dramatic tool reappears in the opening scene (Summer 1846) of *Shipwreck*, as Natalie's letters written in the autumn of 1846 are played out on stage. Carr quotes Natalie's correspondence with her husband:

> Yes, Alexander, romance has left us, and we are no longer children but grown-up people . . . It is not the exalted enthusiasm of yore, youth intoxicated with life and worshipping its idols . . . I no longer see the pedestal on which you used to stand, or the halo round your head. I no longer believe that you are thinking of me and looking at a star at the same moment as I am looking at it and thinking of you; but I see clearly and feel deeply that I love you very much, that my whole being is full of this love, is made up of it, and that this love is my life. . . . (1968: 23)

Another letter to her husband's best friend, Ogarev, reads: 'It used to be better. For a single word, a single thought, one was ready to crucify a man or to be crucified for him. Now one has grown used to everything' (Carr, 1968: 23–4). In Stoppard's transposition of this text, Natalie's unemotional reflections and her disillusionment with her marriage are combined with Ogarev's comic lines and cross-talk, making it more accessible to the audience:

> NATALIE: I love Alexander with my whole life, but it used to be better, when one was ready to crucify a man or be crucified for him for a word, a glance, a thought . . . I could look at a star and think of Alexander far away in exile looking at the same star, and feel we were . . . you know . . .
>
> OGAREV: (*pause*) Triangulated.
>
> NATALIE: Foo to you, then. (*Shipwreck* 128)

Another example of Stoppard's transformation of written correspondence occurs with an open letter signed by a radical in Geneva and printed in the spring of 1867. Quoted in the 'Herzen's Last Years' chapter of *The Romantic Exiles*, this was an indignant response to Herzen's published article in which he had tried in vain to come to terms with the new radicals by defining himself as a complement of their leader Chernyshevsky. Addressed to Herzen, the letter reads:

> I have long since ceased [he wrote] to read, or at any rate to be interested in, your sheet. Hackneyed, long familiar sounds; rhetorical phrases and appeals, ancient variations on an ancient theme [. . .] all this has become too tedious, too boring, too repulsive . . . Yes, the young generation has understood you. Having understood you, it has turned away from you in disgust; and you still dream that you are its guide, that you are 'a power and a force in the Russian state', that you are a leader and representative of youth. [. . .] The young generation has long outstripped you by a whole head in its understanding of facts and events. [. . .] You are a poet, a painter, an artist, a story-teller, a novelist – anything you please, but *not* a political leader and still less a political thinker, the founder of a school and a doctrine [. . .] You the complement of Chernyshevsky! No, Mr Herzen. It is too late now to take refuge behind Chernyshevsky! [. . .] Between you and Chernyshevsky there was not, and could not be, anything in common. [. . .] so completely do you differ in everything, not only in your philosophy of life, but in your attitude to yourself and to other people, not only in general questions, but in the minutest details of your private life [. . .] Come down to earth; forget that you are a great man; remember [. . .] that you, Mr Herzen, are a dead man. (Carr, 1968: 232–3)

Parts of this letter of denunciation are transformed by Stoppard into to a crucial scene of May 1866 (326–8) in *Salvage*, in which Herzen is portrayed in decline, both in his life and his leadership. Whereas only the voice of the radicals is heard in the open letter, Stoppard's dramatic transposition enables the voice of Herzen to be heard as well, foregrounding the irreconcilability between the two generations and their different ways of perceiving reality, a recurring theme in Stoppard's work.

> HERZEN: Your hero Chernyshevsky would agree with me. He was against terrorism. He and I agreed about things much more than we disagreed.
>
> SLEPTSOV: It's difficult to ask him, since he's doing fourteen years' hard labour. Isn't it? But you and Chernyshevsky? Allow me to tell you what I think about that. Between you and Chernyshevsky there is nothing in common. In your philosophy of life, your politics, your character, in the smallest detail of your private life, you and Chernyshevsky are as far apart

> as it's possible to be. The young generation has understood you, and we have turned away in disgust. We don't care about your tedious, hackneyed, sentimental addiction to reminiscence and to ideas which are extinct. Get out of the way, you're behind the times. Forget that you're a great man. What you are is a dead man. (*Salvage* 327–8)

In addition to this extended use of literary sources, Stoppard makes use of visual source material – Edouard Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863) (Figure 13)[84] – and creates from it a tableau set simultaneously in two different places, in a 'June 1849' park scene (after the 1848 uprising in Paris) in *Shipwreck*. While deriving the background landscape directly from Herzen's essays, *From the Other Shore* (1854), the stage direction refers to the source painting:

> *'Déjeuner sur l'herbe' . . . There is a tableau which anticipates – by fourteen years – the painting by Manet. Natalie is the undressed woman sitting on the grass in the company of two fully clothed men, George and Herzen. Emma, stooping to pick a flower, is the woman in the background. The broader composition includes Turgenev, who is at first glance sketching Natalie but in fact sketching Emma. The tableau, however, is an overlapping of two locations, Natalie and George being in one, while Herzen, Emma and Turgenev are together elsewhere. Emma is heavily pregnant. There is a small basket near Natalie.* (190–1)

This *tableau vivant* is designed by Stoppard to conjure up associations with the Manet painting and to give the spectator the impression that the scene is occurring in one place. However, it is not what it seems to be at first glance and this impression and the playfulness with which it is achieved is reinforced by Stoppard's 'musical conception of the structure of dialogue' in the scene (191–4), creating a double-layered cityscape in which Natalie is naked with George,

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[84] Recognised as Manet's greatest work, *Luncheon on the Grass* is known to have been inspired by other paintings, including *The Pastoral Concert* (1508) by Giorgione or Titian, and for having inspired other artists. Claude Monet painted his own version of the same title (1865–1866).

while others carry on their conversations in a 'syncopation of dialogue' (Neufeld, 2007: 414).

Figure 13. Luncheon on the Grass, Manet (1863), Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

A statement of the artist's creative freedom, the style of visual composition in this impressionist painting is by extension similar to Stoppard's dramatic composition in its eclectic mixture and juxtaposition of opposites (the undressed woman and the fully clothed men). The bathing woman in the background in the original painting is transposed in Stoppard's re-creation into a pregnant Emma stooping to pick a flower and holding this pose while Turgenev sketches her, while Natalie is undressing for George. The picnic basket of fruit in front of the nude woman in the Manet painting is also transposed in Stoppard's appropriation into a basket used for collecting mushrooms by Natalie and George, as Turgenev observes, 'They're hunting mushrooms' (192) and as George comments, 'Oh God, we haven't found a single mushroom!' (194), before hurrying away to join the others. When George returns with the basket, the stage

direction, '*Emma takes the basket and upends it. A single virulent toadstool falls out*' (196), signals the poisonous effect the Natalie-George relationship will have on both Herzen and Emma.

The doubling and appropriation of the Manet painting in *Utopia* highlights the discrepancy between appearance and reality, suggesting the subjectivity of perceptions, a theme that Stoppard had earlier explored in *After Magritte* (1970). This particular image demonstrates Stoppard's craftsmanship and his ability 'to turn an image on its head and to tantalise an audience with comic conundrums' in search of ambiguity (Gussow, 1995: xi). While challenging audience perceptions in this way, the imaginative use of Manet's painting – as with Poussin's *Et in Arcadia Ego* in *Arcadia* – offers an opportunity for audiences and readers to experience the original in a different light, just as Stoppard's literary and factual hypotexts take on a fresh perspective through the process of adaptation and appropriation.

6.3.3.2 Cyclical structure and manipulation of time

Stoppard prefers situations 'when things are not quite linear' (quoted in Ostrovsky, *Financial Times Magazine*, 6 September 2003, p. 34), and in this version of Russian history, the action flows effortlessly between historical facts and fiction, past and present time, and a multitude of different locations, as the pendulum of discourse swings from serious political theory to domestic argument. This uniquely Stoppardian reworking and manipulation of time, location and content produces a structure that is both episodic and cyclical. The episodic nature is intentional, according to Trevor Nunn, as the many scenes 'capture the scattered fragments of thought that became a ferment of European revolution' (Hunter, 2005: 212–3). The cyclical aspect of the trilogy appears in the 'constant attention to exile and freedom, disillusionment and renewal, departure and return, on both the political and personal levels, [which] establishes a

cyclical rhythm' (Nadel, 2004: 506). Stoppard underscores this symmetry and cyclicity through a number of devices. Lines and scenes are reprised, objects and words reappear, and time leaps forward and doubles back again, creating a kind of historical echo-chamber.

To illustrate this point, Act 1 of *Voyage* (nine scenes, from 1833 to 1841) takes place in Premukhino, beginning with idyllic family scenes, and Act 2 (fourteen scenes, from 1834 to 1844) is based in Moscow and St. Petersburg and finishes with a return to Premukhino. In *Shipwreck*, the end of Act 1 arrives at the abortive end of the 1848 rebellion in Paris, when, on the news of Belinsky's death, it suddenly offers a 'reprise' (175–7) of an earlier scene, set in September 1847 (158–60). In this scene, Herzen, Turgenev, Bakunin, Herwegh and his wife Emma gather together to bid farewell to Belinsky who was returning to a Russia of punitive censorship. As Stoppard notes in his stage direction: '*The rest of the scene now repeats itself with the difference that instead of the general babel which ensued, the conversation between Belinsky and Turgenev is now "protected", with the other conversations virtually mimed*' (176). This reprise scene illuminates Belinsky's belief in 'aesthetic humanism and in the social commitment of literature' (Kelly, 2002: 19), which Stoppard identifies as 'the seed of *The Coast of Utopia*' (2008a: ix). Belinsky points out the futility of theoretical political models and finally declares: 'I'm sick of utopias. I'm tired of hearing about them' (176). Cyclicity reappears at the opening of the second act in *Shipwreck*, which mimics that of Act 1. At the end of Act 2 (219–21), Herzen's response to the deaths of his wife and his son triggers a flashback to Russia at the time of *Shipwreck*'s first scene, in the summer of 1846, which is a continuation of its beginning scene (125–44).

The cyclical structure of *Voyage* and *Shipwreck* also features in *Salvage*. The play opens with Herzen's dream of a conversation among political revolutionaries from different European

countries, which is strongly evoked in the opening scene (281) of the second act, and is further recalled in the final scene, when Herzen again has a dream, in which Turgenev and Marx appear and ignore him. In contrast to the playful use of running jokes about Bakunin, the story of Kolya's death and the use of his small glove as a leitmotif, recurring four different times in the first act of *Salvage* (230, 235, 266, 280), reinforces the pathos of the event and serves as a reminder of Herzen's trauma and his inner conflicts between idealism and disillusioned reality, while connecting the second and third plays of the trilogy: 'There was a young woman rescued from the sea, my mother's maid. For some reason one of Kolya's gloves was in her pocket. So that's all we got back. A glove' (280).

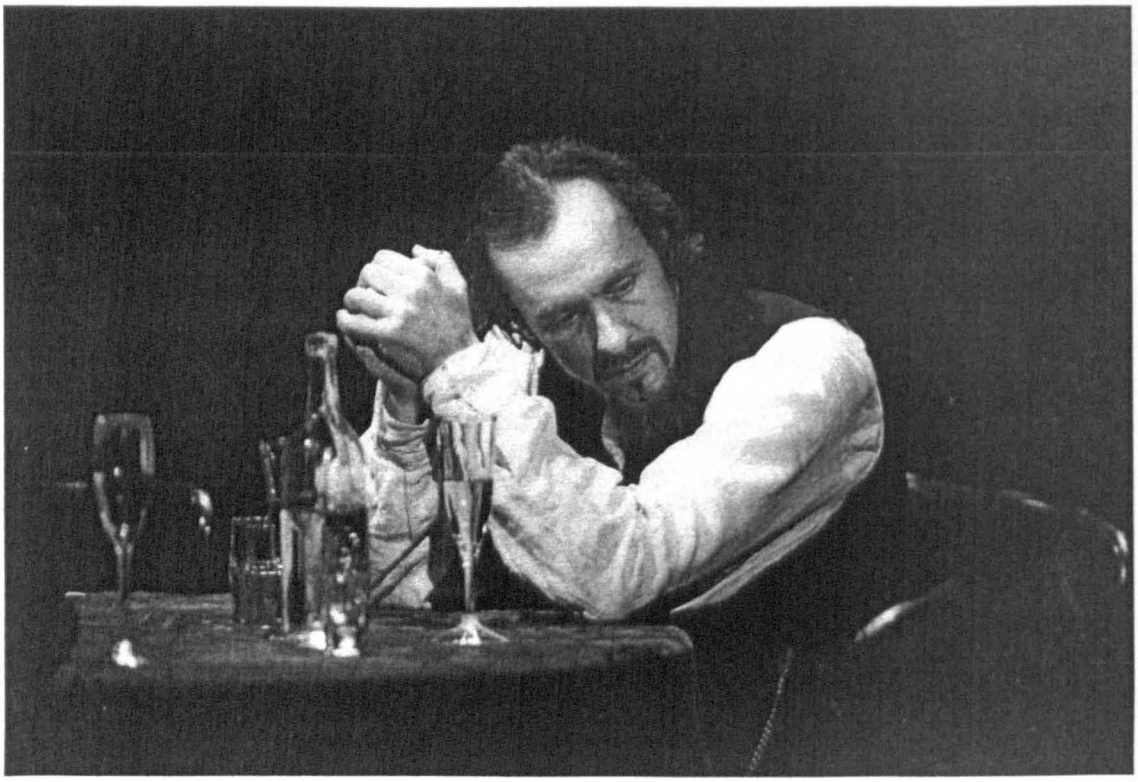

Figure 14. Salvage (2002) Stephen Dillane as Alexander Herzen (photographer Ivan Kyncl). (By permission of the National Theatre Archive.)

Trevor Nunn has underscored the cyclical aspects of Stoppard's carefully constructed work:

> Tom's plays are so linguistically precise, and are so brimful of cross-reference and interconnection, scene to scene, speech to speech . . . because ideas and phrases planted in one scene are paid off, directly and obliquely in many others. (in Hunter, 2005: 205)

When performed in London, the cyclical structure of the plays was achieved in the Olivier theatre by use of a constantly moving, revolving stage, combined with a series of video backdrops dealing with the frequent changes of scenes and locations of the trilogy. These effects portrayed the rapid movement of time and reflected the cyclical pattern of life and history demonstrated throughout the trilogy, while also mirroring the characters constantly going round in circles in their theorizing about imaginary Utopias.[85]

One of the final scenes of *Salvage* takes place at a café-bar in Geneva in May 1866, in which Herzen and his ideas are rejected by the younger generation of radicals, headed by Chernyshevsky. Sleptsov, who was last seen four years earlier at Herzen's house and showed respect at that time, now condemns Herzen, using words strongly reminiscent of Polevoy's warning remarks to Herzen in *Voyage* (see section 6.4.1.1, p. 231). In the final scene of the trilogy, in which Herzen, aged fifty-six, and less than two years from death, sits in the garden of a rented chateau near Geneva, Turgenev and Marx appear in his dream. To Marx, who asserts that

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[85] The illustrated notes of the National Theatre production programme of the trilogy combine selected quotations from each play with the corresponding historical events and contemporary figures in Russia or Europe, as well as commentaries on the influential journals and writers of the time, all of which are transposed into the layers of dramatic context of each play. The intersecting time-scheme between the two acts of *Voyage* is also illustrated to enable spectators to see at a glance how the second act fills in the missing time of the first act and how the spatial and temporal layers of the play interweave.

'my dialectical materialism will catch up with [. . .] Russia, too. [. . .] The broken lives and ignoble deaths of millions will be understood as part of a higher reality, a superior morality, against which resistance is irrational' (335), Herzen replies:

> (*to Marx*) There is something wrong with this picture. Who is this Moloch who promises that everything will be beautiful after we're dead? History has no purpose! History knocks at a thousand gates at every moment, and the gatekeeper is Chance. (*Salvage* 335)

The trilogy ends with a dramatisation of the last occasion on which the entire Herzen family was together. Just as *Voyage* ended on an estate at sundown, with the daughter (Tatiana) kissing her elderly father (Alexander Bakunin), who had grown blind during the course of the play, so *Salvage* concludes with Herzen in the garden of a rented Swiss chateau, now bereft of influence and importance, receiving a kiss from his (and Natalie Ogarev's) young daughter, Liza. The epic has now come full circle (Zimmerman, 2007: 86).

6.4 Polyphony of debates, polyphony of voices

> Chekhov once said that a writer's business was not to provide solutions, only to describe a situation so truthfully, do such justice to all sides of the question, that the reader could no longer evade it. (Berlin, 2008: 349)

The *Utopia* trilogy is notable in Stoppard's output, not just because it transfers a critical period of Russian history and philosophy to the stage through intermodal transposition, but also because it presents the issues and the debates that were the source of heated argument among the protagonists of social change at that time. In doing this, Stoppard follows his procedure (as in

Travesties and *Arcadia*) of presenting all sides with equal weight and allowing the audience to 'have the satisfaction of figuring out some things for themselves' (Delaney, 2001: 32). This is achieved in *Utopia* by interweaving historical contexts and events with the polyphony of debates that they inspired and by presenting polyphony of voices within those debates.

This multi-layered polyphony is mirrored and to an extent signposted by repetition of phrases, images and onstage events, with Stoppard often applying a 'rule of three', a concept he explained while talking to Peter Kemp in a public interview held during the Oxford Literary Festival in 2008, after receiving the Sunday Times Award for Literary Excellence:

> [what] is essential to the art and act and craft of writing plays [is] something to do with the control of the information that flows between the play and audience [. . .] keeping your as it were readership, your audience poised at a precise point of comprehension which is neither over-comprehension nor under-comprehension [. . .] there will be a lot of curves starting at different places and ending in different places, in other words, things which are said at one point in the play have to be remembered at a later point of the play on different levels of subtlety or obviousness, and the theatre subconsciously understands this so well that there is a hoary phrase for this phenomenon, there is something called 'the rule of three', that middle stepping stone. Without that people will not remember what the vicar said on page 7, unless you actually refer to it on page 37, so that it goes bang on page 91. (Stoppard, 2008b)

This structural device enables the audience/readers to keep up with the developments of the plot, but it also functions at a level of audience interaction, in that it re-presents potentially unfamiliar concepts. While the first mention of a philosophical, political, or artistic idea might be acknowledged by the most perceptive 'knowers' in the audience, a second mention of the concept reinforces it for the less knowledgeable members, and a further repetition can help people new to the play, to the hypotext, and even to play-going, to comprehend it in greater depth.

Enhanced by this rule of three, polyphony highlights the coexistence of diverse voices and perspectives in Stoppard's dramas, and is especially prominent in the *Utopia* trilogy, where it is used to re-present the differing views on reality, art, politics, philosophy and idealism of the main characters. These views and the debates around which they centre are woven into a clear and carefully constructed structure in the individual plays and throughout the trilogy itself. Considering the complexity of that structure and of its polyphonic threads, the first part of this section (6.3.1) makes use of tables and a figure as a means of illustrating and clarifying debates which occur only in *Voyage* (6.3.1.1), only in *Shipwreck* and *Salvage* (6.3.1.2), only in *Salvage* (6.3.1.3), and throughout the trilogy (6.3.1.4). It is hoped that tabular representation of the structure of these debates might prevent any confusion (and over-consumption of space) that might arise if explained through words alone.

6.4.1 Debates and voices

The *Utopia* trilogy covers the period from 1833 to 1868, during which a number of off-stage historical events occur. These events, as shown in Table 1, are referred to by various characters and are integral to the onstage action and to the debates which occur between characters. It might be said that they are the historical woof and warp of the narrative, forming the base fabric for the philosophical and political threads.

Table 1. Off-stage historical events in *Utopia*.

Voyage	*Shipwreck*	*Salvage*
1833 ◄——► 1844	1846 ◄——► 1852	1853 ◄——► 1868
1837: Death of Pushkin	1848: Abortive French Revolution	1855: Death of the Czar 1861: Liberation of the serfs 1862: Great Exhibition

The debates which occur during the trilogy and which revolve around these events (as well as events in Herzen's domestic life) can be conveniently classified into eleven categories, though there are inevitable overlaps. These categories are as follows:

1. The philosophical circle versus the political circle (*Voyage*)
2. The philosophy of nature, the nature of reality, reality versus rationality (*Voyage*)
3. Happiness and suffering (*Voyage, Salvage, Salvage*)
4. Art, liberty, utopia (*Voyage, Shipwreck, Salvage*)
5. Literary criticism versus detachment, vindication of literature (*Voyage, Shipwreck, Salvage*)
6. Love and art (*Voyage, Shipwreck, Salvage*)
7. Slavophiles versus Westerners, reality versus illusion (*Shipwreck, Salvage*)
8. Returning to Russia (*Shipwreck*)
9. Progress of history versus abstraction/conceit, materialism versus faith in human dignity (*Shipwreck, Salvage*)
10. Individual versus collective, actual versus theoretical, individual autonomy versus material dialecticism (*Shipwreck, Salvage*)
11. Moderation versus 'new men' and nihilists (*Salvage*)

In order to clarify the complex inter-relationships and flow of debates in the trilogy that this section is exploring, the above classification has been expanded into a chart (Table 2), showing the participants in the debates and the pages on which the debates occur, as indicated in

parentheses. This is akin to Genette's use of a table to 'spare [him] from going into lengthy and irksome detail' in discussing the 'network of correspondences' and 'the characters' table of equivalence' between Homer's *Odyssey* and Joyce's *Ulysses* (1997: 308–9).

Table 2. Debates and voices in *Utopia*.

	***Voyage* (1833–1844) pages 1 to 117**		***Shipwreck* (1846–1852) pages 119 to 221**	***Salvage* (1853–1868) pages 223 to 336**
1	Act One: the philosophical circle	Act Two: the political circle		
2	H (58–9) St (65) H–Po (60–3) Be–Ba (105–6) Be–St (100–3)			
3	T (56–7)	Be–H (108–9)	H (216 – 7) O (220 – 1)	Ba–O–Ma (333)
4	Be (43)		H–Gr (140–1) H–Ba (216–9) Ba–H (157–8) + Sa, Be, T Be (158) (Reprise, 176) H–T (167–9) H (183)	H (238, 257) H (336) Ba–H (259) Ba–H (260–2) O–H (273) Ba–H (332)
5	Be (43–5) Be (45)	Be (86–7) Be (100, 111)	Be–T (145–6) H–T (175)	T–Bz (305–8) Pe–T (315–6)
6	St (21–23)	St–Be (100–1)	N–O (127–8) M–N (183–7) N–H (156) H (209)	Na-H (291) H (335) T–Bz (307)
7			A–T (135–6, 139) H–Ba (218) H (137–9) H (180–1)	H (240–1) H (310–1) T–H (321–2)
8			Be (149) Ba–Be (151–2)	
9			K–H (139–40) H–Ba (216–9) Gr–H (140–1)	Ba–H (260–2)
10			Mx–T (161–4) H (173, 179)	H–Bl (279) H's dream: T–Mx–H (334–5)
11				T–H (287–9) Ch–H (295–9) Sl–H (327–8) H (331)

A = Aksakov, Ba = Bakunin, Be = Belinsky, Bl = Blanc, Bz = Bazarov, Ch = Chernyshevsky, Gr = Granovsky, H = Herzen, K = Ketscher, M = Maria, Ma = Malwida, Mx = Marx, N = Natalie, Na = Natasha, O = Ogarev, Pe = Perotkin, Po = Polevoy, Sa = Sazonov, Sl = Sleptsov, St = Stankevich, T = Turgenev

As can be seen in Table 2, not only do the debates overlap and intermingle, but the voices which take part in them also take on a polyphonic nature, variously appearing and disappearing, either keeping to an original theme, or expressing opinions on a number of issues. Of the eleven

categories of debate, categories 1 and 2 occur in *Voyage* (section 6.4.1.1), category 8 occurs in *Shipwreck* (this is not discussed here, though it is on a topic dear to Stoppard – whether to stay in a 'safe' haven or return to a meaningful literary environment with government restrictions), categories 7, 9 and 10 occur in *Shipwreck* and *Salvage* (section 6.4.1.2), category 11 occurs in *Salvage* (section 6.4.1.3), and categories 3 to 6 are debated in all three plays (section 6.4.1.4).

In this way, the trilogy describes how the focus of debate for these members of the intelligentsia moves over time from an abstract consideration of philosophy and politics (debates which occur only in *Voyage*) to a more practical concern with the progress of history (debates which occur only in *Voyage* and *Shipwreck*) and on to the dialectical materialism that threatened to replace Herzen's humanistic moderation (a debate that occurs only in *Shipwreck*). Meanwhile, universal themes of happiness, suffering, art, liberty, love and literature are debated throughout. The polyphony of debates in the trilogy juxtaposes self-contained debates in each play with debates that span the second and third plays, to the constant accompaniment of debates that occur throughout the trilogy. All these threads are taken up at varying times by varying people in true polyphonic manner, providing a complex interweaving of themes and arguments.

While Table 2 shows the debates in a linear, temporal manner, explanation of how the trilogy works can be further clarified by showing them in a conceptual framework. In this light, Figure 15 serves as a map of interactions and debates (two-way arrows), with Herzen as the central figure, participating in almost every debate. The one-way arrows pointing to Pushkin indicate that the poet appears in *Utopia* as a subject of reference (as do Chopin and George Sand). Figure 15 does not claim to be definitive and does not attempt to reduce the play to a series of debates, but is offered here as a means of identifying and clarifying the main debates and the main participants in those debates. Stoppard is known for his clear, precise structures, but also for

his complexity, and the arguments described in the trilogy can be beneficially reflected in this manner. This does not imply that works of art follow two dimensional, geometrical patterns but rather offers a useful view of the infrastructure of the trilogy, as a precursor to more detailed discussion.

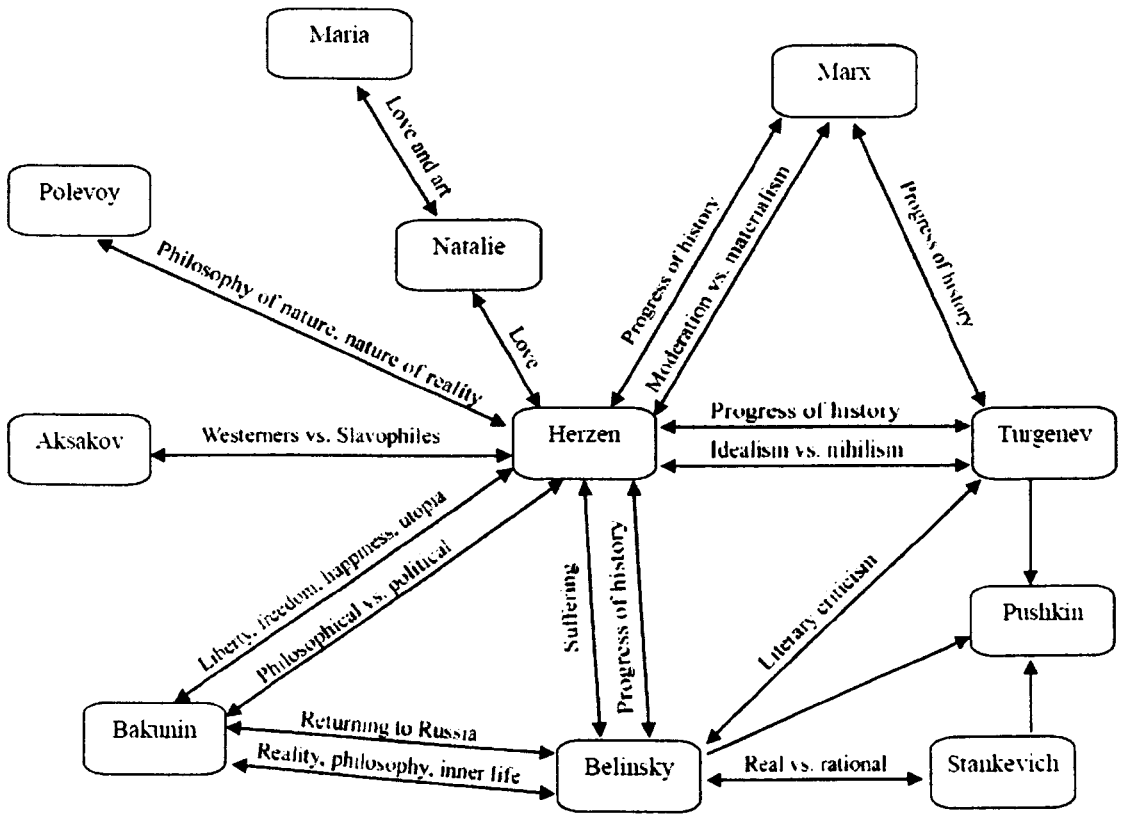

Figure 15. Debates and participating characters in *Utopia.*

Along with Table 2, Figure 15 also highlights the fact that the majority of interactions in *Utopia* are duologues, though there are four significant contributors to the 'progress of history' debate (Herzen, Belinsky, Marx and Turgenev), so that it is possible to identify a polyphony of dualistic threads, or duets, that interweave and complement each other. Further dualism occurs in the structure, in which Stoppard combines the particulars of history with universal concepts,

using the Chekhovian technique of writing about universal ideas (the macro-narrative) through human stories (the micro-narrative).

The clear, careful and schematic structure underlying the complex surface of *Utopia* is highly characteristic of Stoppard's plays. Referring to *Jumpers*, Stoppard indicated that his style of composition was 'to assemble a strange pig's breakfast of visual images and thoughts and try and shake them into some kind of coherent pattern'. From this perspective, *R&G* can be seen as 'a play about two people in a specific concrete, geographical location' and *Travesties* as 'a play about a man who wishes to keep control of the other characters' (in Gussow, 1995: 18, 13, 30). In another interview in 1983, when questioned as to whether *The Real Thing* also started with a visual image, Stoppard replied: 'I wanted to write a play in which the first scene was written by a character in the second scene. [. . .] It's quite a schematic idea'. He goes on to emphasize the playfulness with which it is done: 'It was written because I liked the idea of the game, the device of having the same thing happen two or three times. I'm talking about my scheme, my idiomatic game, a play where it turns out a woman is married to the man who wrote the first scene' (in Gussow, 1995: 40, 41).

6.4.1.1 Debates found only in *Voyage*

While the first play in the trilogy contributes to debates 1 to 6 (Table 2), the first two of these are unique to this play. In the philosophical versus political debate, the aristocratic Bakunin and the poor Belinsky represent the philosophical circle of Moscow University, which has taken refuge in German idealism. Herzen, on the other hand, represents the political circle, looking forward to the French revolution and to a socialist utopia in Russia. Within these circles there is further division and Act 1 introduces differing voices within the philosophical circle: Stankevich,

Bakunin and his sisters represent the idle aristocrat class, in contrast to Belinsky, the poor literary critic. Herzen's opening line of the second act, 'What is wrong with this picture?' (58), refers to the empty theorizing of the philosophical circle that opens the trilogy, as well as to Tsarist tyranny in Russia. Act 2 then introduces the political circle.

In addition to this two-part structure, *Voyage* also presents Bakhtinian '*multiple worlds*' (1984: 34) as three carefully-constructed worlds of Russia converge in structural polyphony. Act 1 presents the class-conscious world of the aristocracy, in which Alexander Bakunin, his wife Varvara, and their daughters, served by household serfs, talk about literature in a domestic setting. By contrast, the second act (set in the same time period) dramatizes the world of harsh reality in the city, in which the poor Belinsky struggles to make his living and other characters seriously discuss the current political status of Russia. Michael Bakunin is the main character who links these two worlds, belonging to both yet committing himself to neither. A third world presented in *Voyage* and continued throughout the trilogy is that of the imaginary utopian 'future Russia', a significant presence that is constantly projected in the arguments of the figures on stage. Stoppard dramatically juxtaposes these different worlds and shows how they are interrelated, though their relative reality is perceived and interpreted differently by the characters.

The second debate in *Voyage* presents the format of the rest of the debates in the trilogy by presenting different pairs of protagonists at different times, each pair picking up the threads of the arguments and adding their own contributions. For instance, the 'reality' debate in *Voyage* involves three key issues: philosophy of nature (initiated by Herzen (58–9) and later picked up by Belinsky and Stankevich (100–3)), nature of reality (Herzen and Polevoy (60–3) and later Stankevich (65)), and reality versus rationality (Belinsky and Bakunin (105–6) and Belinsky–Herzen (108–10)).

Whereas Bakunin and Belinsky defend the voices of 'absolute idealism' in *Voyage*, Herzen stands for 'sceptical idealism'. At this early period of his life, Herzen is just as rebellious as Bakunin and his radical contemporaries, but unlike them he rejects any belief in absolute ideals. Instead, his scepticism is expressed in a line which recurs in *Voyage*: 'What is wrong with this picture?' and 'There's something wrong with this picture' (58–9) and again 'What is wrong with this picture? Nothing. It's Russia' (64). He returns to this line again in his old age, when speaking with Marx: 'There is something wrong with this picture' (*Salvage* 335).

The young Herzen's sceptical attitude is revealed in *Voyage* in his argument with Polevoy, a writer and journalist of the *Messenger* and '*a generation older than the young men*', who claims to be 'a lone voice for reform . . . but reform from above, not revolution from below' (60). Herzen's refutation of his ideas leads Polevoy to make a telling prediction which comes to fruition in *Salvage*: 'I see how it is. Well, it will happen to you one day . . . some young man with a smile on his face, telling you, 'Get out of the way, you're behind the times!' (63).[86] The tragic enactment of this prophecy, when Herzen, along with his periodical, *The Bell*, is ignored and contradicted by the next generation of 'new men' of Russia, is drawn to the attention of the audience by repetition of Polevoy's words in *Salvage*, this time spoken by Sleptsov.[87] In this way,

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[86] Herzen wrote in *My Past and Thoughts*: 'On one occasion, affronted by the absurdity of his objections, I observed that he was just as old-fashioned a Conservative as those against whom he had been fighting all his life. Polevoy was deeply offended by my words and, shaking his head, said to me: "The time will come when you will be rewarded for a whole life-time of toil and effort by some young man's saying with a smile, 'Be off, you are behind the times.'" I felt sorry for him and ashamed of having hurt his feelings, but at the same time I felt that his sentence could be heard in his melancholy words. They were no longer those of a mighty champion, but of a superannuated gladiator who has served his time' (1982: 116–7).

[87] This reference will not be noted if the spectator sees *Voyage* without having seen *Salvage*, in which case audience members will receive the plays in different ways. This does not diminish the stand-alone nature of each play, but offers added meaning to those who experience the trilogy as a whole. (See Chapter 7, pp. 254–7)

Stoppard highlights the transitory nature of ideas, irrespective of the amount of debate that goes into them. The empty philosophizing and self-righteous politicising that begin the trilogy and that continue throughout must give way to 'newer' ones, as history marches on and old ideas (however sincerely held) are rejected:

> The young generation has understood you, and we have turned away in disgust. We don't care about your tedious, hackneyed, sentimental addiction to reminiscence and to ideas which are extinct. *Get out of the way, you're behind the times.* Forget that you're a great man. What you are is a dead man. (*Salvage* 327–8) (my emphasis)

Returning to Polevoy's original comment in *Voyage*, one which sets the scene for the whole trilogy, Stankevich, Bakunin's mentor, expresses the voice of the philosophical circle through a Platonic allusion: 'Reform can't come from above or below, only from within. What you think is reality is nothing but the shadow thrown by the firelight on the wall of the cave' (65). However, he unwittingly contradicts himself later while answering Belinsky's questions on Hegel's 'dialectical logic of history' (102) and asserting that 'Everything is real, and everything real is rational' (101):

> STANKEVICH: Family life, sitting around the fire on winter evenings . . .
> BELINSKY: Real.
> STANKEVICH: (*agonized*) Then what is the shadow on the wall of the cave?
> BELINSKY: That's philosophy. (*Voyage* 103)

Stoppard here shows us a dualism within characters as well as between them. This tendency to 'write about oppositions and double acts' is based on his notion that the 'conflict between

one's intellectual and emotional response to questions of morality produce the tension that makes the play' (quoted in Gussow, 1995: 13–4). In another example, Belinsky, who appears to get the upper hand in discussion with Stankevich is reproached by Herzen a few pages later. Although he was also influenced by Hegelian philosophy in his early years, Herzen points out the 'mental confusion' (107) in Belinsky's articles in the *Moscow Observer*:

> You've got Hegel's Dialectical Spirit of History upside down and so has he. People don't storm the Bastille because history proceeds by zigzags. History zigzags because when people have had enough, they storm the Bastille. When you turn him right way up, Hegel is the algebra of revolution. [. . .] Belinsky! We're not at the mercy of an imaginative cosmic force [. . .] In the taxonomy of despotism, Russia is genius to itself. Oh yes, I've read your articles. Belinsky, you've blinded yourself. (*Voyage* 108–9)

The 'zigs' and 'zags' in this speech refer to Hegel's 'thesis, antithesis, synthesis'[88] logic of historical development (Zimmerman, 2007: 92). A gifted man of polemics, mirroring Stoppard himself, Herzen embodies here the playwright's central principle of rejecting the uncritical worship of abstract, radical, or absolute faith.

Against the background of these debates on the nature of reality, an overbearing image (literally and metaphorically) of 'a six-foot ginger cat' or 'something as lawless as a gigantic ginger cat' (108) appears. First mentioned by Herzen, it signifies the harsh reality of censorship in Russia and the suppression of liberal ideas, while at the same time serving as a foreboding of Belinsky's death (to be reported by Herzen at the end of Act 2 in *Shipwreck*) (175): '*In an*

[88] Though Hegel did not use these terms himself, they are often used to describe his analysis of historical and philosophical progress (the Hegelian dialectic). An intellectual proposition (the thesis) leads, by reaction, to its antithesis. The synthesis then identifies the truths that are common to both and forms a new proposition.

overlap, a Ginger Cat, smoking a cigar and holding a glass of champagne, watches Belinsky from a little distance' (110). The ginger cat becomes a recurring image/motif in the trilogy (108, 109, 114) functioning as a symbol of lawless Russian despotism: 'Who is this Moloch that eats his children?' (110) or 'Who is this Moloch who promises that everything will be beautiful after we're dead?' (335).

6.4.1.2 Debates found only in *Shipwreck* and *Salvage*

Stoppard writes in the introduction to the trilogy that:

> The best-known of [Herzen's] *bêtes noires* was Karl Marx. Herzen had no time for the kind of mono-theory which bound history, progress and individual autonomy to some huge abstraction like Marx's material dialecticism. What he did have time for – and what bound Isaiah Berlin to him heart and soul – was the individual over the collective, the actual over the theoretical. What he detested above all was the conceit that theoretical future bliss justified actual present sacrifice. (2008a: xii)

Closely linked to this Herzen-Marx disagreement, the progress of history debate (Table 2, debate number 9), which overlaps with the individual versus the collective debate (Table 2, debate number 10), emerges as one of the most crucial threads in the trilogy, mainly developed in *Shipwreck* and *Salvage* through various duologues. These present multiple perspectives, using statement and counterstatement between characters, before the debate is picked up by others, who interpret it in differing ways. To illustrate: the progress of history versus abstraction/conceit debate (Table 2, debate number 9) involves Ketscher–Herzen (139–40) and is later picked up by George (181). The materialism versus faith in human dignity debate (also part of debate number 9) is initiated by Granovsky–Herzen (140–1), picked up by Bakunin–Herzen (260–2) and

continued between Herzen–Blanc (279). The debate centring on the individual versus the collective, the actual versus the theoretical, and individual autonomy versus material dialecticism (Table 2, debate number 10) is played out between Marx–Turgenev (161–4), followed by Herzen (173, 179), Herzen–Bakunin (216–9), and Turgenev–Marx–Herzen (334–5).

As in the other debates in the trilogy, Stoppard brings different characters in to debate these important issues, allowing them to offer their contributions in different combinations, like musical instruments or voices in a choir, taking up a melody and transforming it through different keys, in different pairings, and in different timbres. In this way, he opens up the issues to the audience while exploring for himself the pros and cons of complex questions and offering his 'take' on the human condition, as the retelling and recovery of Russian history assumes more universal proportions. During this process, we occasionally glimpse Stoppard's own opinions through Herzen's lens. Berlin describes Herzen's central principle as 'that the goal of life is life itself, that to sacrifice the present to some vague and unpredictable future is a form of delusion which leads to the destruction of all that alone is valuable in men and societies' (2008: 222), which Stoppard clearly paraphrases in the introduction to the trilogy. In *Shipwreck*, Herzen's remarks on the death of his son (216), adapted from Herzen's *From the Other Shore*, and quoted and recounted in *Russian Thinkers* (Berlin, 2008: 224), emphasize this view:

> Because children grow up, we think a child's purpose is to grow up. But a child's purpose is to be a child. Nature doesn't disdain what lives only for a *day*. It pours the whole of itself into each moment. We don't value the lily less for not being made of flint and built to last. Life's bounty is in its flow, later is too late. Where is the song when it's been sung? The dance when it's been danced? (*Shipwreck* 216)

Herzen's prediction, 'The idea will not perish. What we let fall will be picked up by those behind' (335), is realised through Stoppard's writing of *Utopia*. Using Herzen's refutation of Marx's 'dialectical materialism' (334) and his claim about the unattainable nature of Utopia (336), Stoppard highlights the absurdity of dogmatism and of despotic ideals which claim to purchase progress at the cost of individual freedom and sacrifice. In addition to those of Herzen, Marx, Turgenev and Bakunin, Stoppard's own voice permeates these debates, as a playwright born in a country which has undergone similar government restrictions and censorship.

6.4.1.3 Debate found only in *Salvage*

In *Salvage*, as with the 1848 French uprising in *Shipwreck*, the 1861 liberation of the Russian serfs (off-stage) (Table 1) serves as a critical event in Herzen's political life, his anticipations and hopes being followed by disappointment when, as Natasha says, '[t]he Emancipation was managed in a Russian way' and 'The peasants are told they're free and they think the land they've worked now belongs to them, so when it turns out nothing belongs to them and they have to pay rent for their plots, well, obviously freedom bears an uncanny resemblance to serfdom' (310–1). Despite this disappointment, Herzen doesn't agree with the secret revolutionary elite and *Salvage* features the debate between the philosophy of moderation voiced by him and the insistent call for revolution on the part of the 'new men' of Russia.

The debate on moderation versus the 'new men' (Table 2, debate 11) occupies duologues between Turgenev–Herzen (287–9), Chernyshevsky–Herzen (295–9) and Sleptsov–Herzen (327–8) in Geneva, before being finally picked up again by Herzen (331). Herzen's conflict with the radicals headed by Nicholas Chernyshevsky is clearly presented in a scene set in July 1859 (*Salvage* 295–302), in which Chernyshevsky denounces Herzen's vision of Russian socialism:

I read *From the Other Shore* and *Letters from France and Italy*. [. . .] I marvelled at you. And now I find I can't read you anymore. I don't want brilliance. It turns my stomach. I want the black bread of facts and figures, analysis. [. . .] Your generation were the romantics of the cause. You *liked* being revolutionaries, if that's what you were. [. . .] Above all, I won't listen to babbling about reform in *The Bell*. Only the axe will do. (*Salvage* 296)

Herzen defends his generation from the ingratitude of these 'new men' and reproaches Chernyshevsky, saying that he saw 'enough blood running in the gutters to last' (297) in Paris. Herzen vows to hold forever the vision of 'progress by peaceful steps' (297) and promises that *The Bell* will never agitate for an uprising.

CHERNYSHEVSKY: Not *communal* socialism, but *communistic* socialism, with millions sharing the labour and the harvest –

HERZEN: (*angrily*) No! No! – We haven't embarked on this long journey only to arrive at the utopia of the antheap. (*Salvage* 299)

Prior to this clash with the 'new men', Herzen's argument in *The Bell* that freeing the serfs was the first step in reforming Russia was met with scepticism by Turgenev. Having been denounced by Chernyshevsky as a 'liberal', Turgenev turns this concept against Herzen:

TURGENEV: And that's another thing. The word 'liberal' has now entered the scatological vocabulary, like 'halfwit' or 'hypocrite' . . . It means anyone who supports peaceful reform over violent revolution – like you and *The Bell*. [. . .] Personally, I only denounce you as sentimental fantasists. You're talking to a man who's made a literary reputation out of the Russian peasantry, and they're no different from Italian, French or German peasants. [. . .] We're Europeans, we're just late, that's all. Would you mind if I emptied my bladder into your laurels?

He moves away.

HERZEN: Isn't that what you just did? (*Salvage* 288–9)

At the performance recorded by the National Theatre's archive video (2002) of the production, this remark of Herzen received great applause from the audience, similar to that for Belinsky's speech in *Voyage*. While Turgenev is sceptical of Herzen's peaceful reform, he also distrusts the new generation of radical 'black bread' (296) revolutionaries, which he parodies through the figure of Bazarov, the 'nihilist' protagonist of *Fathers and Children*. Adding a further, hypotextual voice to the debates, Berlin describes Herzen and Turgenev as having the same outlook on 'the complexity and insolubility of the central problems and, therefore, of the absurdity of trying to solve them by means of political or sociological instruments' while identifying Turgenev as 'a cool, detached, at times slightly mocking observer who looks upon the tragedies of life from a comparatively remote point of view' (2008: 231). In other words:

> oscillating between one vantage point and another, between the claims of society and of the individual, the claims of love and of daily life; between heroic virtue and realistic scepticism, the morality of Hamlet and the morality of Don Quixote, the necessity for efficient political organisation and the necessity for individual self-expression; remaining suspended in a state of agreeable indecision, sympathetic melancholy, ironical, free from cynicism and sentimentality, perceptive, scrupulously truthful and uncommitted. [. . .] He enjoyed remaining in an intermediate position, he enjoyed almost too much his lack of will to believe, and because he stood aside, because he contemplated in tranquillity, he was able to produce great literary masterpieces of a finished kind, rounded stories told in peaceful retrospect, with well-constructed beginnings, middle and ends. (Berlin, 2008: 231–2)

As the voice of literary detachment, Turgenev speaks for Stoppard, who questions through him the subjectivity of literary criticism. While Belinsky reacts to Gogol's book from a personal

perspective, 'First the bad notice [in the *Contemporary*], then the abusive letter to the author', Turgenev simply asserts: 'it's a book . . . a sincerely stupid book, but why drive him madder? You should pity him' (145). In this way, Turgenev rejects Belinsky's dogmatic attitude on the social responsibility of literature and presents the voice of detached moderation, mirroring Stoppard's own philosophy:

> I'm not pure spirit, but I'm not society's keeper either. [. . .] People complain about me having no attitude in my stories. They're puzzled. Do I approve or disapprove? Do I want the reader to agree with this man or the other man? Whose fault is it that this peasant is a useless drunkard, his or ours? My readers want to know where I stand. What has that got to do with my reader? How would that make me a better writer? What has it got to do with anything? (*Shipwreck* 145)

This theme reappears in *Salvage* in reference to Turgenev's own book, *Fathers and Children*, for which Turgenev says he is 'being called a traitor by both the left and the right, on the one hand for my malicious travesty of radical youth, and on the other hand for sucking up to it' (315). In this duologue, '*a guest, Perotkin, who has a glass of wine and a cigar*' (313), is reminiscent of the '*Ginger Cat, smoking a cigar and holding a glass of champagne*' (110), as he questions Turgenev about his book:

> PEROTKIN: And what was your attitude really?
> TURGENEV: My attitude?
> PEROTKIN: Yes, your purpose.
> TURGENEV: My purpose was to write a novel.
> PEROTKIN: So you don't take sides between the fathers and the children?
> TURGENEV: On the contrary, I take every possible side. (*Salvage* 315–6)

The moderation versus nihilism (or extremism) debate takes various forms in *Salvage*, presenting a theme which appears only in this final play of the trilogy, but which is central to appreciation of Herzen's voyage, shipwreck and salvage, in his domestic life and his philosophical and political beliefs. His cornerstone is moderation in the face of adversity, just as Turgenev stands for detachment and objectivity in life and in writing. The polyphony in this case is that of two similar voices (plus perhaps Stoppard himself) taking the middle path, in opposition to the extremes of radicalism and nihilism.

6.4.1.4 Debates found throughout *Utopia*

Table 3. The 'Art, liberty, Utopia' debate in *Utopia*.

#	Debate	Protagonists
4	Art, liberty, Utopia	Belinsky (43) Herzen–Granovsky (140–1) Bakunin–Herzen (157–8) with comments by Sazonov, Belinsky, and Turgenev Belinsky (158) [Reprise: 176] Herzen–Turgenev (167–9): Idealism versus disillusion Herzen (183) on freedom Herzen–Bakunin (216–9) Herzen (238) on English liberty Herzen (257) to his son Sasha Bakunin–Herzen (259) Bakunin–Herzen (260–2) Ogarev–Herzen (272) Bakunin–Herzen (332) Herzen (336) on Utopia

Debates 3 to 6 (Table 2) appear throughout the trilogy, focusing on happiness (debate 3), art and liberty (debate 4), literature (debate 5) and love (debate 6). These are embodied throughout

by the recurring cycle of hope and despair which Herzen experiences in his personal and public lives, in which renewal is followed by disillusion, reunion by loss, and success by further struggles. This 'happiness, art, liberty, Utopia' debate offers one of the most crucial and interlocking debates in the *Utopia* trilogy, as represented by Table 3, which attempts to recapitulate the polyphonic structure and the flow of debate in the right-hand column.

Happiness is defined in different ways in *Salvage*, with the anarchist Bakunin describing 'Seven degrees of human happiness! First, to die fighting for liberty; second, love and friendship; third, art and science; fourth, a cigarette; five, six, seven, drinking, eating, and sleeping' (333–4). On the other hand, Ogarev proposes, 'First, love and friendship', while Malwida von Meysenbug, a German female exile, who becomes a tutor and governess for Herzen's children, considers that the first degree of human happiness is 'to raise a human being to the highest degree of which she is capable' (334). This is reminiscent of Turgenev's reflection on the irony of happiness:

> At Premukhino, the eternal, the ideal, seems to be in every breath around you, like a voice telling you how much more sublime is the happiness of the inner life, compared with the vulgar happiness of the crowd! And then you're dead. There's something missing in this picture. Stankevich was coming round to it, before the end. He said: 'For happiness, apparently, something of the real world is necessary'. (*Voyage* 56)

Liberty and equality are also themes which run through the trilogy and which are taken up by most of the protagonists. A sample of the treatment of this theme can be found in *Shipwreck*:

> BAKUNIN: The liberty of each, for the equality of all!
>
> HERZEN: What does that mean? It doesn't mean anything.
>
> BAKUNIN: I am not free unless you, too, are free!
>
> HERZEN: That's nonsense. You were free when I was locked up. [. . .] Freedom is having a passport. Freedom is being allowed to sing in my bath as loudly as will not interfere with

my neighbour's freedom to sing a different tune in his. But above all, let my neighbour and me be free to join or not to join the revolutionary opera, the state orchestra, the Committee of Public Harmony . . .

TURGENEV: This is a metaphor, is it?

HERZEN: Not necessarily.

SAZONOV: There is no contradiction between individual freedom and duty to the collective . . . (*Shipwreck* 157)

The theme of utopia is central to the trilogy for various reasons. Not only is the trilogy named after this imaginary domestic, philosophical and political land, but it also paints the different pictures of utopia as envisioned by the anarchists, realists, romantics, socialists, communists, nihilists and others, showing that this 'universal' ideal is in fact a subjective projection of personal hopes – that one (wo)man's utopia is another (wo)man's hell. In order to reach this promised land dictators are prepared to subject their people to serfdom and loss of artistic freedom, social reformers are prepared to sacrifice the individual for the collective, and the personal pursuit of love is viewed as sufficient reason for inflicting pain and destroying domestic harmony.

While presenting the differing views of his characters on this goal that they all share, but which they define in wildly opposing ways, Stoppard provides commentary on the complexities and inconsistencies of the human condition, which all too often takes the form of a zero-sum game,[89] the success of one person resulting from the loss of another. As in *Travesties*, he shows the inadequacies of personal and political manifestos, presenting in the *Utopia* trilogy a retelling of an ideological search that started in Russia and Europe in the nineteenth century and led to the

[89] A zero-sum game (a term taken from game theory and economic theory) describes situations in which one participant's gain is exactly balanced by the loss of the other participant (Neumann, 1944: 46–7).

Bolshevik revolution of 1917. As the trilogy progresses and the different factions express their ideas, it becomes apparent that an 'ideal world' cannot be imposed by leaders or achieved by political or philosophical theories. In fact, none of the protagonists can be described as reaching even the coast of Utopia, but remain sailing (or shipwrecked in) their own particular ideological seas. Stoppard's own thoughts on the feasibility of 'Utopia for all' can be seen in Belinsky's speech in *Shipwreck*, 'I'm sick of utopias. I'm tired of hearing about them' (176), and in Herzen's angry outburst in the preceding pages:

> A republic behaving like the monarchy it displaced is not a failure of aesthetics. This is a republic by superstition only, by incantation. [. . .] Well, don't imagine today was the end. When the lid blows off this kettle it'll take the kitchen with it. All your civilised pursuits and refinements which you call the triumph of order will be firewood and pisspots once the workers kick down the doors and come into their kingdom. (*Shipwreck* 168–9)

Herzen also expresses in *Shipwreck* his realization that 'there is no such place, that's why it's called utopia' (216). He reconciles himself with the fact that his hopes for a new Russia, for freedom for the serfs, and for artistic freedom for the writers, have foundered in the recurring cycle of hope and disillusion; even his philosophy of moderation cannot achieve the ideals that he fought for so desperately in his youth. The trilogy ends, therefore, with Herzen piecing his life and his ideas together, only to be confronted with a new generation of radical reformists – people who intend to impose an impersonal revolution and to take the torch of reform from his hand:

> Nobody's got the map. There is no map. In the West, socialism may win next time, but it's not history's destination. Socialism, too, will reach its own extremes and absurdities, and once more Europe will burst at the seams. [. . .] Are you sorry for the civilisation? I am sorry for it too. (*Shipwreck* 219)

As already mentioned, these ongoing debates centre around Herzen (Figure 15), who mirrors to some extent Stoppard's own voice of moderation and reason in his clash with political radicals in *his* time. The polyphony in the debates which continue throughout the trilogy therefore takes the form of differing accompaniments to the 'ground bass' of the main character (Herzen). As with a work like Pachelbel's *Canon*, or Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, Herzen continues his voice throughout the trilogy, while others embellish, adapt, oppose and contradict him. As Neufeld observes:

> Though Stoppard's dialogue moves generally forward, it does so by a circuitous pattern of doubling back on itself. Repeatedly, a character interrupts the forward trajectory of the conversation with a comment that appears to be a *non sequitur*, but is really the logical response to an earlier comment, now forgotten. [. . .] The effect is musical, a kind of theme and variations, in which the interwoven structure becomes as fascinating as the progress of the dialogue. (Neufeld, 2007: 415)

The final entry of 'new' voices in the composition provides a fitting end, with Utopia still unattainable in the distance and the cycle of hope and disappointment set to recur once more.

6.5 Conclusion

> Whatever the motive, from the adapter's perspective, adaptation is an act of appropriating or salvaging, and this is always a double process of interpreting and then creating something new. (Hutcheon, 2006: 20)

As with the plays investigated in the previous chapters, *Utopia* sheds a different light on the

playwright's use of hypertextuality and polyphony in his *oeuvre*. In this case, his 'palimpsestuous' (Hutcheon, 2006: 6) use of pre-existing sources takes on the nature of narrative adaptation, as he re-presents events from Russian history and from literary texts about that history. Hutcheon notes that 'the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation' (2006: 8) and that 'an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing' (2006: 9).

As Stoppard has remarked, 'Theatre is a form of recreation – in both senses of the word. It has the ability to entertain but also to recreate a past era, past life' (Ostrovsky, *Financial Times Magazine*, 6 September 2003, p. 37). By shifting the mode of engagement from *telling* stories (the narrative hypotexts) to *showing* them (the dramatic hypertext), or through 'a shift in ontology from the real to the fictional, from a historical account or biography to a fictionalized narrative or drama' (Hutcheon, 2006: 8), what emerges in Stoppard's stage adaptation is the creation of an entertaining dramatic event using the lives, ideas, philosophies and writings of real people caught up in historical reality. In the process of this dramatisation, Stoppard has transmediated the individual units of the story as well as the political and personal development of characters from the hypotexts, and *Utopia* demonstrates 'the ontological shift that can happen in adaptations of an historical event or an actual person's life into a reimagined, fictional form' (Hutcheon, 2006: 17).

Stoppard spent about five years in researching and writing this Russian epic (Ostrovsky, *Financial Times Magazine*, 6 September 2003, p. 36), the final version of which has been compared to 'a stage version of a nineteenth-century novel', being 'idealistic, overloaded with characters who talk by paragraph' (Hornby, 2003: 633). Stoppard breathed new life into this part of Russian history, making the characters and their ideas accessible and comprehensible to

Western audiences and readers, many of whom were sufficiently inspired by the plays to buy the original hypotexts, as the title of Julie Bosman's *New York Times* article explains: 'Isaiah Berlin text goes from unread to in demand, thanks to Stoppard's 'Utopia" (26 January 2007). As Hutcheon indicates, 'our interest piqued, we may actually read or see that so-called original *after* we have experienced the adaptation, thereby challenging the authority of any notion of priority. Multiple versions exist laterally, not vertically' (2006: xiii).

Although *Utopia* draws upon and quotes extensively from the source texts and contains abundant examples of textual and structural doublings, what distinguishes the trilogy is that Stoppard interweaves these with a highly stylized mode of dialogue replete with syncopated cross-talk and comic doubling lines and scenes, which makes the lives and ideas of the forgotten revolutionaries more human, more accessible and relevant to the contemporary audience and reader. Stoppard doesn't alter historical facts in his trilogy, but rearranges and adds his own comments about the Russian writings, along with his own thoughts about the Russian thinkers. While exploring the relationship between writing and politics through the writers themselves (Belinsky, Bakunin, Herzen, Turgenev), *Utopia* expands the debate to the role of writers in society and their historical responsibility; the moral and ethical implication of the ideas addressed suggests symbolic doubling of today's world and offers a perspective on present-day society. As Herzen appeals to us at the very end of *Utopia*:

> the ancient dream of a perfect society where circles are squared and conflict is cancelled out. But there is no such place and Utopia is its name. So until we stop killing our way towards it, we won't be grown up as human beings. Our meaning is in how we live in an imperfect world, in our time. We have no other. (*Salvage* 336)

Stoppard uses his hypotexts and the historical events behind them as resources and reference points for the opinions and principles of his characters, who are allowed to express themselves equally in a series of debates which spans the whole trilogy. Stoppard's own ideas do appear, voiced mainly by Herzen and occasionally by Turgenev, but these are not imposed on the readers and audience members, who are left to make up their own minds. In this way, Stoppard is not only retelling history in the content of his drama but he is bringing it closer to the audience and readers, educating them at a number of levels (literary, philosophical, historical, cultural and social), while at the same time providing entertainment and self-referring on the act of writing:

> Reading Belinsky is no fun at all. Reading Bakunin can be occasionally invigorating, and Herzen is a prince of memoirists, with a natural gift for polemics. But it is the pure artist among them who brings us closest to the world of the nineteenth-century Russia intelligentsia, and moreover Turgenev's *Sportsmen's Sketches* were plausibly said to have done more than anything else to turn the 'Reforming Tsar' Alexander II towards abolishing serfdom. Perhaps it is the artist after all, rather than the three publicists of genius, who is the true hero of *The Coast of Utopia*. (Stoppard, 2008a: xiii)

In this polyphonically structured trilogy, Stoppard dramatizes the multiple voices of Bakunin, Belinsky, Herzen, Turgenev and several minor Russian thinkers, who constantly debate their visions of the future of Russia, satisfying Bakhtin's definition of polyphony. *Utopia* is ideologically and structurally multi-voiced, presenting a fully polyphonic picture of interrelationships in life. Bakhtin identifies '*coexistence* and *interaction*' as characteristic of the polyphonic novel, in which 'all material of reality' is organized 'in the form of a dramatic juxtaposition' (1984: 28), and this coexistence, interaction and dramatic juxtaposition is also important in the *Utopia* trilogy, in which Stoppard elaborates upon the ideological differences

between characters, 'in their *simultaneity*, to *juxtapose* and *counterpose* them dramatically' and sees 'everything as coexisting' (1984: 28). Stoppard also takes the interpersonal relationship of ideas further by exploring the intrapersonal realm and dramatizing 'internal contradictions and internal stages in the development of a single person' (Bakhtin, 1984: 28). These two voices of characters are in simultaneous counterpoise in *Utopia*, emerging '*between various consciousnesses*, that is, their interaction and interdependence' (Bakhtin, 1984: 36).

The polyphonic structure of the debates in *Utopia* is also extended to the audience, as Stoppard leads them to participate in the arguments raised by certain characters. The technique of giving equal weight to the protagonists allows the audience to judge the relative merits of the arguments being propounded, but it also implies that their own voices are important in the debates. In this way, Stoppard brings a series of issues to the attention of the audience and invites them to join in, rather than passively observing the action. The trilogy is written according to an interrogatory method of development (a series of questions and answers) so that when characters raise questions in the three plays, they seem to be also putting them to the audience. This is a feature of much of Stoppard's output, evident in such questions as: Who are we? (*R&G*), What is Art? (*Travesties*), What is carnal embrace? Why did Byron suddenly leave England? (*Arcadia*), What's wrong with this picture? or Who's got the map? (*Utopia*). The figure of Turgenev is instrumental in this process, acting as the playwright's proxy and being like an onstage audience, but at no time trying to impose any of his ideas on other people.

In view of the above arguments, this chapter suggests that Bakhtin's assertion that 'drama is by its very nature alien to genuine polyphony' (1984: 34) does not apply in the case of *Utopia*, in which Stoppard has shown that multi-voiced polyphony can be a valuable tool of the playwright, enabling and enhancing his desire to present multiple perspectives in an unbiased manner, and

actively involving the audience in the onstage debates.

The polyphony of debates over an uncertain political reality and uneasy personal relationships, combined with the multiple voices heard across (and within) characters, offers a perspective on one of the most crucial and recurring Stoppardian themes: the subjectivity of perception, or the questioning of 'reality' as we perceive it. It is significant that Stankevich alludes to Plato's allegory of the prisoners captured in the cave, and their interpretations of the shadows on the cave wall: 'What you think is reality is nothing but the shadow thrown by the firelight on the wall of the cave' and later '(*agonized*) Then what's the shadow on the wall of the cave?' (*Voyage* 65, 103).

Finally, Stoppard's trilogy – in which history, politics and theatre intermingle in increasingly complex transformations of each other, as Belinsky would posit, 'because everything in the universe is unfolding together' (*Voyage* 43) – reflects on the nature of human existence, particularly in the dramatisation of Herzen's life in *Shipwreck* and *Salvage*, conjuring up striking images of aging and death, the fading of powers, mortality, and man's loneliness and uncertainty in a thunder-struck (literally and metaphorically) universe, still 'searching for meaning in [the] bewildering universe' (Dan David Prize, 2008) and trying to make sense of the complex world. As with his other plays, while in part reflecting the values and beliefs of society, *Utopia* offers a philosophical statement on contemporary life and on the emptiness of ideology:

> Stoppard has long half-joked about his alleged lack of convictions. He will quote that line from Christopher Hampton's play *The Philanthropist*: "I am a man of no convictions. At least I think I am." [. . .] Now he turns it on its head: "I'm a man of many convictions. They all coexist." (Brooks, *Sunday Times*, 23 June 2002, p. 5)

Chapter 7

Conclusion: The (Re)Creative Process

> Texts feed off each other and create other texts, and other critical studies; literature creates other literature. Part of the sheer pleasure of the reading experience must be the tension between the familiar and the new, and the recognition both of similarity and difference, between ourselves and between texts. The pleasure exists, and persists, then, in the act of reading in, around, and on (and on). (Sanders, 2006: 14)

While considering as its primary focus of analysis the variety or 'kinetic processes of transposition and transmutation' (Letissier, 2009: 3) of texts and voices in Stoppard's stage plays, this study has concerned itself on one level with tracing the origins of his hypertexts from various disciplines (literature, paintings, philosophy, history and science) and with the way in which he uses these for his dramatic ends. At another level, it has addressed the intricately constructed polyphony of contrasting perspectives and dualities within the hypertexts, through which the playwright expresses multiple perspectives on the issues involved, questioning commonly-held views and exposing the basic assumptions underlying human behaviour.

Stoppard's work offers fresh ways of looking at some old questions, suggesting what he calls 'the moral matrix *from* which we draw our values about what the world ought to be like' (Gussow, 1995: 20) and against which one can make sense of the present world. His plays are also 'invigorated by a liberating use of a shared literary past' (Brater, 2001: 211) and serve to expand the inexhaustible or incremental nature of literature. As Michael Worton and Judith Still point out, 'every literary imitation is a *supplement* which seeks to complete and supplant the

original and which functions at times for later readers as the pre-text of the "original"' (1990: 7).

Georges Letissier comments further on this multidirectional process, saying that 'it is as if the so-called original work could never ever be complete or self-sufficient in itself' and '[t]his merging of origin and supplement, occurring whenever the hypertext gives the illusion of being the pre-text of its original source text, demonstrates that the intertextual link is by no means a one-way process, but should be envisaged in its plurality' (2009: 6). *R&G* for instance acknowledges its indebtedness to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in its paratextual title, while being an individual work in its own right. Having experienced Stoppard's transfocalising hypertext, there will be few readers or spectators who will approach Shakespeare's original work without contemplating the fate of the two minor characters (and probably the Player) as reinterpreted in *R&G*. In this case, as in the other plays considered in this study, Stoppard's hypertext functions in turn as a supplement to its hypotext.

Stoppard's hypertexts abound in this kind of palimpsestic (re)writing, reworking Greek and Roman poetry and drama, Renaissance drama, Victorian literature, modern novels and poetry, nonfiction essays and biographies of historical figures. Twentieth-century modernist literature and other nonfiction genres are also used by Stoppard to enrich his writing with a wealth of allusions and cross references. In addition to these literary borrowings and adaptations, his dramas also rework crucial concepts or ideas from other disciplines, ranging from philosophy, science, and history, to painting, music and other performance arts. History in particular comes to the fore as a source of hypotextual material in Stoppard's plays. In terms of art, the creative and deliberate overlapping of visual images in his plays offers a fresh interpretation for well-known paintings, so that the play-goer can never see them in quite the same way again. Those who have seen *Arcadia*, for instance, will find it difficult to view Poussin's seventeenth-century landscape

painting *Et in Arcadia Ego* without recalling Stoppard's dualistic evocation of the title phrase. Music also plays a part in his plays, in a more explicit manner than the polyphonic interweaving of arguments and themes which is one of the focuses of this study.[90]

Having noted that Stoppard's sources are not solely literary, but originate from various fields, this study has favoured Genette's approach, expanding his description of 'the palimpsestuous nature of texts' and his observation that '[a]ny text is hypertext, grafting itself onto a hypotext, an earlier text that it imitates and transforms' (1997: ix). In this context, the study of Stoppard's hypertextual practices and polyphonic re-presentations leads to the question of their effect, both on the stage and on the printed page. This has been touched upon in the previous chapters, but is considered in more depth in this concluding chapter, since it concerns the playwright's philosophy of (re)creation and the overall effectiveness of his intertextual and polyphonic playwriting techniques, which have been central topic of this thesis.

The topic of effectiveness can be examined more conveniently by dividing it into two parts, both of which start from the proposition (the subject matter of the earlier chapters) that Stoppard's plays are characterised by their wealth of intertextuality and take their sources from various disciplines and artistic genres. The first part is concerned with identifying and describing the appeal of Stoppard's plays. What is it that constitutes the pleasurable experience involved in

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[90] Although not directly dealt with in the previous chapters, intertextual borrowings from performance arts – for instance music hall performances and acrobatics (*Jumpers*), pop records from the 1950s to the 1970s (*The Real Thing* and *Rock'n'Roll*) – contribute to Stoppard's plays by (re)creating a further layer of meaning. Not only do the lyrics supplement the stage action, but the songs themselves evoke the atmosphere of their age. *The Real Thing* includes *You've lost that lovin' feelin'* by The Righteous Brothers, *I'm into something good* by Herman's Hermits, *A whiter shade of pale* by Procul Harum, and *I'm a believer* by The Monkees, while *Rock'n'Roll* includes twenty-nine songs from major groups and pop artists of the time, including Bob Dylan, Pink Floyd, The Beatles, The Beach Boys, Plastic People Of The Universe, Velvet Underground, The Doors and The Rolling Stones.

the act of (re)reading or (re)spectating Stoppard's explicitly palimpsestuous texts? The second part is related to the first and considers the extent to which observers of the hypertexts (audience members or readers of the printed play) need to be aware of and conversant with the hypotexts. Is it necessary to understand chaos theory or to have read Byron and Virgil (for example) to appreciate *Arcadia* fully, in terms of intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional satisfaction?

In answer to the first question, Hutcheon suggests that 'the pleasure of the audience in this case relies on the "palimpsestuousness" of the experience, on the oscillation between a past and a present one. And, in the end, it is the audience who must experience the adaptation *as an adaptation*' (2006: 172). From this perspective, adaptation is a natural way of re-working recurring themes in a contemporary context; by providing access to these themes, the playwright is giving audience members the opportunity to re-visit tales from their heritage and to re-interpret them in their own situation. In this way, intertextuality provides a means of re-constructing and comprehending reality:

> adaptation is how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places. [. . .] Evolving by cultural selection, travelling stories adapt to local cultures, just as populations of organisms adapt to local environments. [. . .] In the workings of the human imagination, adaptation is the norm, not the exception. (Hutcheon, 2006: 177)

A musical analogy is appropriate in attempting to answer the second part of the question, particularly in view of Stoppard's playful and rhythmic spinning of language and ideas. In this sense, and considering the informed and knowledgeable members of the audience, it can be said that being able to analyze a piece of music deepens the appreciation and enjoyment of the music since one can engage with it more thoroughly. In the same way, although Stoppard has remarked

that 'Plays are events rather than texts. They're written to happen, not to be read' (Gussow, 1995: 37), the benefit of text-oriented analysis, particularly after audio-visually experiencing such multi-layered and multi-voiced plays as his, is that the reader can see and register more fully the layers of texts that are grafted (explicitly and implicitly) onto his plays and the web of voices that he (re)creates and (re)interprets. Julie Sanders also identifies the 'pleasurable aspect of recognizing the intertextual relationships between appropriations and their sources' (2006: 160). Building upon Genette's categorisation of *Ulysses* as 'the very type of the self-proclaimed hypertext' while being 'an extreme case of emancipation from the hypotext' (1997: 309), Sanders also observes that reading Joyce's novel alone and appreciating it as a 1920s Dublin narrative in its own right is 'by no means a failed or insufficient reading. And yet a reading of that narrative alongside an informed awareness of the events of Homer's epic clearly enriches the potential for the production of meaning' (2006: 6). Awareness of the hypotexts, in other words, can sharpen our sense of the potential layers of meaning that emerge from the hypertext.

From the point of view of the uninformed audience member, such awareness does not exist, and it must be asked whether the play stands by itself as a work of art, with its own 'presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be' (Benjamin quoted in Hutcheon, 2006: 6). Hutcheon argues that adaptations are 'also autonomous works that can be interpreted and valued as such' and 'each adaptation must also stand on its own, separate from the palimpsestic pleasures of doubled experience' (2006: 6, 173). In different interviews, Stoppard has remarked on his potential audience: 'Obviously the very fact that one is writing theatre, as opposed to a thesis, predicates one's attitude to the material. I write for a fairly broad audience, with me plumb in the middle. I don't write for rarefied audiences. I don't think of myself as being rarefied' and 'I mentally define my audience as people who like the jokes I like.

Quite frankly, that doesn't leave out very many people' (in Gussow 1995: 13, 4). Therefore, for the author, *Travesties* for instance can stand on its own as 'a play about a man who wishes to keep control of the other characters' (Stoppard quoted in Gussow, 1995: 30). As a result of my own reading, viewing and researching of his plays, I agree with Stoppard and feel that his (re)creations can indeed stand by themselves and afford pleasure regardless of their intertextual content. To support his argument in my own way, it can be said that his plays offer multiple 'affordances', allowing audience members to interpret and enjoy them in ways that are personally appropriate. Leo Van Lier offers the analogy of a leaf in the forest when explaining the concept of affordances:

> An affordance is a particular property of the environment that is relevant [. . .] to an active, perceiving organism in that environment. [. . .] In the forest, a leaf can offer very different affordances to different organisms. It can offer crawling on for a tree frog, cutting for an ant, food for a caterpillar, shade for a spider, medicine for a shaman, and so on. In all cases, the leaf is the same: its properties do not change; it is just that different progenies are perceived and acted upon by different organisms. (2000: 252)

If we substitute 'one of Stoppard's plays' for 'leaf' in the above quotation, and 'audience members' for 'organisms', we can see that the wealth of multi-layered content in his plays allows theatre-goers to respond to those plays in their own ways. Awareness of the grafting between hypotext and hypertext makes it possible for the knowing receiver to see complex layers of meaning, while at the same time the complex structure and careful use of intertextual references in Stoppard's work, along with various visual and cinematic effects, combine to produce works which can also be enjoyed by audience members who are new to the original sources.

Stoppard builds upon established literature as '[n]ew science "builds" on established

science' and therefore his works are 'always already doubled' (Phelan, 1993: 119, 126). Combined with the polyphony of dualities and arguments 'between two points of view, both of which I can see virtue in' and his tendency 'to write about oppositions and double acts' (Stoppard quoted in Gussow, 1995: 5, 14) his hypertexts can be described as *doubly double-voiced.* This double-vision is also evident in the structure of his works, in which the coexistence of opposites (such as present and past, chance and causality, order and chaos, and romantic/imaginative and classical/rational temperaments) is presented as two ends of a continuum. Brater has also noted that Stoppard's work, which entails 'untangling the rich mixture of discourses, a heady allusive style that embraces quick wit, the surprising turn of phrase, and a bit more than a nodding acquaintance with relativity, quantum physics, and the provability [. . .] of Fermat's last theorem, has proved to be both a delight to his audiences and a challenge to dramatic criticism' (2001: 203).

The fact that his plays are at once serious and funny is crucial to their popularity and the combination of these features is one of his particular qualities. This mixture of 'delight' and 'challenge' in his work, what Gussow calls 'two sides of the author's nature, the philosopher and the pragmatist, the intellectual and the entertainer' (1995: x), captures the continuum of dualities in Stoppard's plays. Michael Vanden Heuvel also comments on this duality and on the playwright's preference for 'paradox and irreconcilable antinomies' (2001: 214) and describes the effect such double-visioned plays achieve. In *Arcadia* and as with all his plays:

> Stoppard, always more interested in the interplay of order and disorder than in maintaining a prevailing belief in one or the other, or in reconciling them, draws from nonlinear dynamics the notion that, while disorder is on exhibit everywhere [. . .] a principal of "self-similarity" provides basins of order and periodicity to the chaos, enriching it and making it signify in

> unexpected ways. Repetition [. . .] operates in Stoppard to render his dramatic world orderly, even as the iterations themselves create the f(r)ictional differences that make the story of the play complex and significant. (Vanden Heuvel, 2001: 227)

The interrelationship and co-presence rather than separation and exclusion of seemingly disparate elements suggests the intertextual and interrelated nature of almost everything that constitutes our life. Stoppard's palimpsestuous and polyphonic works use this concept to reveal the oxymoron of deterministic chaos, placing plurality above fixity and precluding any fixed grid of meaning.

Stoppard's works continue the heritage of Aristophanes, whose plays were intended '[t]o teach, to show, to please' (Aristophanes, 2005: x) and Horace, whose *Ars Poetica* urges authors 'to delight and to instruct'. These ideas resonate in Stoppard's intriguing, engaging, intellectually stimulating and thought-provoking dramas, produced and enhanced by his multiple-voiced hypertextual dialogues. Whether evoking and transforming existing texts or retelling the lives of historical figures, the ideas addressed in Stoppard's works assume wider implications, creating symbolic images of contemporary life and drawing meaningful parallels between the past, the present and the future.

Stoppard's drama signals the inexhaustibility of literature by preserving the literary and artistic inheritance, 'keep[ing] that prior work alive, giving it an afterlife' (Hutcheon, 2006: 176). Furthermore, it is in the nature of adaptation that his hypertexts might be expected in turn to stimulate the (re)creativity of future writers by serving as their hypotexts, thus feeding back into the algorithm of fractal reiteration (*Arcadia*). As Sanders stresses, 'the process of adaptation proves multi-layered and endlessly plural in its gestures and effects' and it 'cannot aim towards closure or summing up, but only gesture outwards towards future possibilities and ongoing

adaptational processes' (2006: 159–60, 156–7). As the literary and artistic past has served to inspire Stoppard's hypertexts, it may be conjectured that his works might anticipate and imply other hypertexts that are *after* Stoppard, realising the forward-moving, open-ended, yet circular interplay of the (re)creative process. As the playwright, Henry, comments in *The Real Thing*, 'What we're trying to do is to write cricket bats, so that when we throw up an idea and give it a little knock, it might . . . *travel* . . .' (1982: 52), and again:

> I don't think writers are sacred, but words are. They deserve respect. If you get the right ones in the right order, you can nudge the world a little or make a poem which children will speak for you when you're dead. (*The Real Thing*, 1982: 54)

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